CERTAINTIES AND HOPES

AND OTHER SERMONS

RICE

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CERTAINTIES AND HOPES

Chas B Rice

CERTAINTIES AND HOPES

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY

CHARLES BAKER RICE

THE PILGRIM PRESS

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PREFACE

CHARLES BAKER RICE, D.D., was born in the hills of Franklin County, in the beautiful town of Conway, Massachusetts. His father was Colonel Austin Rice, a man widely known in his county. Colonel Austin Rice was a man devoted to the fear of God. He was a Puritan, genuine in his relations toward men, of large influence in his town and county. He was for many years a member of the Board of Trustees in Mt. Holyoke Seminary.

In 1905 Dr. Rice wrote a memorial volume in honor of his father, Colonel Rice, and his mother, Charlotte Baker Rice. The little book so thoroughly revealed the beauty and piety and culture of a typical New England home in the Connecticut valley that the Editor of the Springfield Republican asked and received permission to publish it, in large part, in that paper. In this Christian home and community Charles Baker Rice grew up to manhood. It was a liberty-loving community, and early in

life he became deeply imbued with free-soil principles. In 1856, in the first campaign of the Republican party, he stumped Pennsylvania for Fremont and Dayton.

He was the intimate friend of the elder Samuel Bowles. Both men were lovers of liberty and devoted members of the Republican party. All his life Dr. Rice continued an earnest member of this party. He appreciated its defects and limitations, but he never forgot the great debt which our country owes to the party of liberty.

Dr. Rice graduated from Bangor Theological Seminary. His first parish was in Saco, Me. From Saco he came to Danvers, Mass., where he was pastor for thirty-one years.

The two counties of Massachusetts he loved above all others were Franklin and Essex. His eyes would fill with tears whenever he spoke to the writer of Franklin County. The hill towns of that county grew increasingly dear to him as the years went by. He loved Essex County not only because of the personal associations of his long and happy pastorate, but also because of the large place which it

has had in the great struggle for liberty and equality. Essex County was the home of John G. Whittier, his own honored and loved friend. These two men were intimate. Charles Rice was a Puritan and Congregationalist; John G. Whittier, a Friend; but the two men were alike in their intense loyalty to the ideals of Jesus Christ, and their love for a true, free democracy.

Charles B. Rice represented his town and county in the Legislature as Representative and as Senator. He also served the State on the Board of Education, and for many years he was a member of the School Committee of Danvers.

He was a man of large heartedness. There wasn't in him a bit of narrowness. If all New Englanders had had the spirit of Charles B. Rice in his attitude toward the incoming stranger, Massachusetts and the Nation would be different. He was a democrat in the truest sense of the word. There was no aristocracy about him. He loved Massachusetts ideals. How often have I heard him quote the words of Article 30 of Part 1st of the Constitution

of Massachusetts, "A government of laws and not of men." The interests of his mind and heart were world-wide. He had what President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia has called an "international mind." I recall his deep interest in the struggle between Russia and Japan.

What a lover of good literature he was! How he loved Milton and the classic literature of our English language! He kept in living touch with the best writers of the English language. Yearly he read Euripides, Æschylus and Sophocles. Only a few days before he finally left his work, he was talking with a friend and spoke with enthusiasm of the beauty of these Greek writers; and then looking up in his animated way, he said, "But the best things of the Greeks would seem commonplace in comparison with the beauties of the prophetic Word."

In 1894 he gave up his work as pastor of the ancient church of Danvers. How he loved that church! Among the gracious memories of his last days is a prayer which he offered in the family circle for that church. How he

loved the beautiful manse with its fields and fruit trees! How he loved nature itself! He never forgot the training of the life of the farm on the top of the hill in old Conway. Like Henry Ward Beecher, he had a great love for precious stones. He always carried some in his vest pocket. It was a joy to see him hold them in the palm of his hand. His love for precious stones made him enjoy the imagery of the book of Revelation.

In 1894 he was chosen to be the first Secretary of the newly constituted Congregational Board of Pastoral Supply. He entered upon an untried work. To it he brought his large, wide knowledge of men. He knew their limitations, but he knew their best. He took men at their best. For nineteen years he faithfully served the pastors of Massachusetts and of New England. He was faithful to the churches as well as to the pastors. The more one knew him, the more one appreciated his charitable judgment of men and churches; and here is his own judgment of the work which he did, in a series of "Suggestions or Hints relative to the Office

of the Board of Pastoral Supply—for whatever they may be worth—by Charles B. Rice, May 10, 1913;" "For the Occupants of the Office." He closes with Hint 20,

"The work and life of the office should be enjoyed. It is a useful work, animating in its usefulness. It has much variety. It has its difficulties; but they are not greater than it is wholesome for one to meet. It may have disagreeable features or incidents. But its disagreeable features vanish away or are greatly lightened, as is the case in all life, when they are met with a clear and constant and strong purpose to do one's duty as exactly and graciously as possible."

He was a Congregationalist to the core; he loved the independency of the Congregational Church. He was glad in every good word and work in the denomination. He was a man of devout Christian character. He did not carry his heart on his sleeve; he was not given to emotional expression of his faith and experience. But he had a deep reverence for God. The beautiful expression in the 119th Psalm may be used of him; he was a man "de-

voted to the fear of God." He was an impartial man; he was not a self-seeker, either for himself or for his family.

What a royal friend he was! Those of us who had a place in the inner sanctuary of his heart know how devotedly he loved. What a large fund of humanity he had! How he loved the children whom he met near the school as he came up from the North Station to his office! How he brought in his bag apples and gave out to the youngsters and rejoiced in their brightening faces as they took them! How he appreciated the kindly offices of the policeman at the crossing! How the boy with his evening paper always met him graciously! How the people loved to look at him as he passed along the street, the grand old man whose face was filled with the light of the glory of God!

It does not become me to speak of his home life. That was a sanctuary to him; and those of us who knew him best knew the warmth of affection for his home, for wife and children. Now and again he would open his heart and mind and talk with the writer upon the deeper things of life, upon the certainties and the

hopes of the Christian. It was good to know a man like Charles Baker Rice. It is good to know that we have the hope and the assurance of knowing him as he was, and as he has been transfigured into the image of the Master whom he has loved and so long faithfully served.

FREDERICK E. EMRICH.

Boston, July 12, 1915.

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I

CERTAINTIES AND HOPES OF HUMAN LIFE

I

CERTAINTIES AND HOPES OF HUMAN LIFE

Psalms 119:19. I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me.

Hebrews 6:19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail.

THE stranger or the traveler in a foreign land thinks much of the messages that may come to him from his home. He looks for them at the appointed times or places. The sailor, when he may not reach his harbor, is glad even of a roadstead where his anchors will hold fast. The commandments of the Lord are messages to men, otherwise as strangers in a lonely land. The truths of the Christian revelation hold steady in hope the souls of men, otherwise as vessels in unknown waters, drifting upon an unlighted shore.

I purpose to speak of some of the things that may be confidently counted on concerning the life or state of man. The certainties of

human life are not the same as its hopes; sometimes they seem to be the certainties of despair. But the hopes of life must be fitted to its certainties and must lay hold on them, or they will be vain hopes only. We will trace out as we may some of the primal certainties of our human state, and we will lay the lines of hope upon them as best we can. Our topic might be briefly named:—The things certain, or the things certainly to be hoped for, in religion and in human life. And while we look over a little our human heritage in being and hope, may the living God Himself guide our thoughts and strengthen our hearts.

Among certainties, it is certain first, that our present natural earthly lives will soon end. We shall not live here always, nor long. On this point there is a grim assurance of positiveness that does not need to be dwelt upon. No one has ever shown any signs of living, or of being about to live, on the earth forever. We are mortal, and swift in our mortality. The present living life of the earth, as compared with the life that is past and dead, is only as the narrow line of flame that runs

across a field when the dried grasses are burned. There is a thin edge only of flickering and soon dying fire, and all behind it, the field is black. So this flame of our present life will go out quickly in darkness—we must reckon upon this.

It follows, certainly, that if we are to have any hope of lasting life, it cannot be here on the earth, as things now are. If we are to hold any long-reaching hopes at all, they must go out upon some other, different stage of being. The continuing greatness of human life, if there is any such, is not here. Our enduring possessions, if we have any, will be somewhere else. It is clear, too, that if we are ever to have any such lasting stage of life, beyond the present, the things belonging to that stage of life must be of the greatest importance. And if there are any things now within ourselves, or belonging to us, that are to pass on into that coming, enduring state, then these must be the main things for us. Our chief care must be about the enduring things with us, if there are any such things.

It is certain that our present lives, even

while they last, are not altogether what they ought to be. They are mixed with evil; and they are partly evil. We are ourselves at least in some degree sinful. I do not think this needs to be proved. If there is any one to whom it is not clear, I think it ought to be clear to him. The state of the man with no sense of the liability to sin, or of the actual existence of sin, in others and in himself, is not, I think, most sound or wholesome. We are infected, more or less, with evil. So that the entrance in some manner upon a sinless state is certainly among the things to be hoped for, —if it is possible to hope for it. We have thus these things,—continuance in life, and perfection of life to be hoped for. We certainly do not possess them here. It is to be desired that we should gain them if we may.

Going on further, it may be said that there is some natural and reasonable ground for hope of a coming endless and possibly better life for man. I am leaving aside for the present all Biblical testimonies, and am speaking here only in these terms of possible hope. There is a natural hope of immortality. Many

persons have not had it; and there are many with whom it has not been steadily strong. But many also have kept it steadily. It is a hope that multitudes of men at least love and cherish, and hold as closely as they can. In some lights this natural hope of immortality looks strong and wonderful. It must be strong to keep at all its place in the midst of all the natural conditions that would weaken and shatter it. This hope lasts in spite of the constant knowledge we have that all the present powers of life appear to depend upon the health and soundness of the body, while the body is known to be most frail. This hope can look in the face of death and of utter bodily dissolution. It can witness the unreturning departure of those that die, and can endure the unbroken silence of all the dead. It is a mighty hope that these mighty foes have not cast down. The endurance so far of such a hope in the midst of all these surrounding darknesses is in itself a strong ground of hope. It is best that we should rest upon it, if we can. It is desirable for us certainly to keep that immortal hope.

Besides this hope, and standing fast by it, we have in our present life a constraining and solid sense of duty. That is to be much thought of when we are looking for human certainties, or continuing prospects. A peculiar firmness rests in this sense of duty, however we came by it. When you know your duty, nothing can possibly make you think that it is not best for you to do it. You may not always know surely what your duty is; but when you do know it, you have struck on something that stands fast. You may not always do what you know you ought to do; often we turn back from duty. But we never think, and never can think, that it is better that we should not do our duty. We know that right-doing is for the best. This is a certainty that nothing can ever really shake. When a man loses his life in the discharge of duty, it may be shocking to think of: we may feel that we should not have blamed him much, or perhaps at all, if he had shrunk back; but we never think that a man makes a mistake, really, in going on, even to death, in what he knows is the clear way of duty. Something

tells us that duty and lasting safety belong together, whether a man lives or dies. In the end of things we are sure of it.

This certainty that duty and final safety go in the end together is most impressive and significant. We feel that we have struck upon something that does not belong with the shifting and passing current of earthly things, but with things that are in some manner unchangeable and eternal. We are encouraged to believe that there are such unchangeable and lasting things. We gain a sense of the existence and properly controlling authority of somewhat that is above the earth, and that is supreme above all present things. The voice of duty is among the sweetest of all sounds that ever reach the earth. It is a voice from above the clouds, from beyond the changing lights and shadows. We know a little as we hear it, where we are. And we rejoice that though we are strangers in the earth, God is not hiding altogether His commandments from us. Following this voice we may reach our home.

We may see that this sense of the certain

safety and supremacy of duty easily connects itself with that hope of human immortality of which I have spoken. They are likely both together to be springing out of an eternal source. It is likely too, that that source is the being of an immortal and rightfully governing God.

Here we take another great step of hope. We need not stop much for formal attempted proofs. We are following the lines of hopeful and desirable probabilities. Those are the useful lines of common practical judgment and safety. Thus we believe in God. We think that we see reflected a little upon our human nature the steadfast glory and commanding greatness of an infinite Being from whom our lives are sprung, and we rejoice in the thought.

In some part indeed, our belief in God rests upon grounds of most clear and unchangeable certainty. The creation about us, and within us, to which we belong, bears witness to it. It is *known* that an intelligent Almightiness occupies the creation in all its masses and in every atom. It is not a matter of question in the least, that within this universal Power we

ourselves "live and move and have our being." If there could ever have been any rational doubt concerning the pervasive presence and the full control of this Power throughout the creation, that doubt has utterly vanished with the studies of nature in our own times. Of a certainty such a Power surrounds and grasps, penetrates and orders the visible creation.

That this universal Power possesses also all the distinctive qualities of personal life, we may not in the same positive manner know. But it is most hopeful and most reasonable to believe it. It is likely that the supreme Intelligence, ordering and animating the creation, is intelligent and free concerning itself. We ourselves have the crowning gift of personal life. It is likely that it is found most full with Him who gives it to us. Thus with trembling, rejoicing confidence we recognize Him, the majestic Father of men. Thus with mighty awe and mighty hope, we call Him the "King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God."

Believing thus in God, it is reasonable for

us to believe that He might make some especial disclosure of Himself to us beyond that which we could gather from nature through our natural powers of thought. Our hopes certainly, would lead us to look for or to receive such a further and fuller revelation of God. It would be good news from God.

It is certain too, that if there has been given us any such special revelation, it is the Christian revelation. There is no other to place before it, or beside it. It is the Christian good news, the Christian gospel, or none at all. Still further, we can quickly see that the Christian revelation, as we have it in the Bible, is well suited to our wants. The Christian gospel recognizes our present human life as it is, —mortal, frail, and brief, mixed with weakness and sin, and yet with hopes and powers looking toward lasting good. It makes known God, pure, holy, and lofty, as He ought to be, and yet gracious and forgiving. It sets the standard of human life and character high, and yet gives hope for those that stumble and fall. It makes known to us that God has care and love for men. It shows that God draws nigh

to men, and comes Himself, to be as one of us. In this our human life is distinguished from all other mortal life on earth, and is marked out as equipped for possible immortality. So we are given the hope of an endless life with God, and of being in some likeness ourselves to God. And I think we may add that with those who receive and cherish and employ its truths and powers, this Christian gospel gives some present proof of gain in strength and purity of soul, as if they were in preparation somewhat for an endless and sinless life.

This Christian revelation—this Christian plan, is surely wide-reaching and full of hope. The central feature of it is the Person whose name it bears. He is pictured as the Son of man and the Son of God, as a man of unequalled majesty and unequalled tenderness, as walking in conspicuously close companionship with God, and in sympathetic nearness to the weakness and sinfulness of men; as dying in some manner for the sins of men; as foreseeing and declaring—unlike to any other man—the continuance and completion

of His purpose beyond His death and by His death; as purposing and promising that after the darkness of death His followers should be with Him and should behold His glory; as appointing in the presence of death a sacrament of memorial, significant of life and death and the remission of sins; and as returning from His death to the sight of His followers, kindling in their minds a steadfast and reverent love for Himself, an abiding purpose of service in rightness of life, and an unquenchable hope of immortality.

Such an One is surely a fitting Leader of mankind into holiness and everlasting life, if such leadership is ever to be given to man. It is certainly hopeful for us to follow such a Leader; it is likely to be safe. It is surely not hopeful *not* to follow Him. It may not be safe. There is a force of reason in the saying that he that believeth on the Son of God shall reach to everlasting life, and none besides.

Difficulties, doubts, and oppositions may arise, and they are ever arising. We must distinguish somewhat between them. The

Scriptures in which we have the record of this Christian revelation are always open to reverent and careful study. The fully confirmed conclusions of such study are always to be accepted, even if some change is thus made upon the opinions we have held. But the study must be honest, thorough and conclusive. It is fair also and proper to say that as Christian men we should not be forward to denounce in a positive and sweeping manner conclusions unlike to our own, that may be put forth by other reverent and true-hearted Christian men. It may be that we shall ourselves at some time accept those same conclusions.

But there are also views, more or less threatening to the general faith of the Christian church, which have their origin in preconceived natural or philosophical theories and speculations. Those theories or beliefs may be no more solid than other beliefs that are contrary to them. For instance, some people set aside at once whatever in the Biblical records asserts or implies any departure or variation from the present ordinary apparent course of outward nature as connected with human life.

But this is not the most hopeful view. If our human life is ever to pass on into an immortal stage, it must be by some departure from the present apparent course of nature, or by some growth beyond it, and such deviation from nature or growth beyond it, if it may ever occur in future, may also possibly have occurred at some points and in some degree in the past. And if there is any coming endless stage of human life, it is likely that the powers and agencies of that life are now and eternally in existence and activity; and they may possibly make themselves known upon fitting occasions in the present time. And if there is, as there is, an eternal God, who is the Author and Framer of nature, and in whom the whole order and power and substance of nature rests, then it is likely, yes, certain that within nature, and without shattering the frame of nature, this God may bring to pass results differing from the common course of nature, upon occasions befitting the exercise of His own reason and grace. Further, if there has been once on the earth a man living the life of holiness and strength, and walking

as if He were upon the very confines of the land of holiness and immortality, it need not seem incredible to us that for a holy and beneficent purpose, God should raise up that man from the dead. It should scarcely seem incredible or unlikely that such a man, in closest fellowship with God, should have power Himself both to lay down His life and to take it again. That such an event should have occurred is assuredly a thing most hopeful for us, and most quickening to all our thoughts of a life for ourselves beyond this passing time. For thus is He our Forerunner; and thus has He become the first fruits of those that sleep, and of those that are yet to sleep.

The fact cannot be altogether forgotten, that the attempted removal of all the apparently supernatural features or elements in the Scriptural record must almost of necessity weaken somewhat the grounds of Christian confidence concerning a future life for man. In so far it is a darkening labor, downward against hope. If there are sometimes those, who, while they are thus laboring, exhibit an exhilaration of spirit, as if they were pioneers

upon the path of progress, we cannot sympathize with them in such a mind. If our prospects of immortality were to be obscured, we might of necessity endure it; but we should not rejoice. If we are made to look only into a coming night, we must not be called upon to be glad. If we are to walk consciously down into the eternal darkness, we shall not sing as we go. Rather do we take up for ourselves the mighty word of promise, and say—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us who are kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

We have looked together upon some of the plain certainties of our human lives; and we have sought wherever we could, to follow the lines of hope. Our lives are mortal, and stained with evil. But the commandments of the Lord are not hidden from us. We hear

the solemn glorious voice of duty, and the melodies of hope. We draw nigh in faith and reason to God, the maker of all things and the source of life. We welcome the coming to us of the holy Son of God, our Redeemer, who stands also now for us by the throne of God. We believe in Him; and may He help our unbelief.

This word of good tidings is preached to us every Sabbath day in all our places of holy assembling. We have it with us in every solitary hour of remembrance and meditation. I trust that we shall all receive and hold fast this Christian hope. It may not suffice to scatter every darkening doubt, or quench every mortal fear. Yet it is a hope full of immortality. It has need to be held fast. It is to be kept, with faith and purpose, and by sacred counselling with God. It is a hope that will not make us ashamed. It is a hope that "entereth into that within the vail;" a hope that takes a hand of duty and leads us, that strives at least to lead us, toward the land of holy and perpetual habitation. And in that land we shall cease to be pilgrims and strangers.

II

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

II

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM

It is our work in life to be quickly gathering goodness and strength from God within ourselves. As we read the Psalms, it belongs to us to be fashioning our souls under the light and grace that thus pass before us.

This Psalm is a picture of the believer's life. With its few touches, strong and beautiful, it sets forth the way of faith on earth.

The picture is first of all, one of cheerfulness and hope. It opens brightly;—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." It ends brightly;—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." And in the space between, wherever any shadows lie, there is still no fear of evil. The whole view is trustful, restful, hopeful. The believing man is to be cared for as a sheep by its shepherd. He is to be guided, fed, and guarded. He is to suffer no want and be af-

frighted by no danger. Goodness from above is to follow him and be about him all his life. Mercy is to go along with that goodness, so that he may not be forsaken in any trouble, and so that he need not be left hopeless even if he sins. The life that is thus before us is cheerful and hopeful, it is prosperous and safe.

But the view of life here given us includes the things that are in themselves dark and sorrowful. The shadings are in it. It would not be a true view of life if they were not. Here are enemies by the way. Here is the valley of the shadow of death to be passed through. If we had only the sketch of a life light and gay, with no darkness at all upon it, there would be no more of comfort for us in it than there would be of truth. We should have different experiences ourselves, which the story of the Psalm would not fit, and which the promise of the Psalm would not help us to bear. But the dark things are to be seen here; and we know that the safety and cheerfulness and peace of the Psalm include them and shine over them.

Our enemies here spoken of stand for all

oppositions and hindrances. The valley of the shadow of death stands for all fears and darkness. It may be our sickness, or the sickness of our friends when we or they seem to be near to death, or it may be when we or they are indeed soon to die; or when they are dead and are gone from us; or it may be when, for whatever cause, some urgent and dreadful heaviness and darkness are upon us. The valley of the shadow of death is not an unknown spot to any of the wayfarers of the earth, unless it be to those who pass through it so early or so quickly that they do not see it as they pass.

The fears and sadness of life are in this Psalm. But the Shepherd and Keeper of our souls walks beside us with His rod and staff. Thus the hope we have as believers in God is not because we suppose that He will remove out of the way before us every trouble or sorrow; it is because we know that He Himself will uphold and guide us, and will enable us to pass through every trouble and sorrow in safety, and with growing strength.

The assured continuous and final prosperity

of the believer's life appears in this also, that he not only passes through every trial without loss, but that he gains often much of light and strength and grace in the trial and by the trial, as he goes through with it. While his foes are looking on, a table is prepared before him. It is in the presence of his enemies, not seldom, that he grows most fixedly courageous and steadfast and gracious.

In the sorrows of life we all may learn what things are most secure and valuable, and what Friend may be most certainly and happily relied on. The great things of life are not perpetual lightness and gladness of mind, if these were possible. The great things are a devout and steady hope and peace and rest in faith. These things will never be taken from us. The Psalm describes the trustful life as exposed to griefs and perils, but still as securely safe and prosperous.

Farther, this life of which the Psalmist speaks, is a life of which God is peculiarly the Guide and Keeper. It is a life divinely led, protected and blessed. The account of it begins thus;—"The Lord is my Shepherd."

This is why it is secure and prosperous. When this can be certainly known of any life, all the other things that are spoken of in the Psalm may also be known as sure to follow. It is an unusual assurance. The sheep of a common flock may not be sure always of protection and pasturage at the shepherd's hands. The shepherd may not be always watchful, or he may not be strong enough to keep off all attacks, or the streams and pastures where he would lead them may dry up and fail. But nothing like this can ever befall those whom the Lord has undertaken to provide for and guard. This is the chief thing with the safe and hopeful life here pictured, that the Lord has the care of it, and that it rests in His power and love. Thus it is always hopeful, and thus its hopefulness covers the naturally dark parts of the way, as well as the parts that would of themselves be light. It is a life everywhere under the hand of God.

And now it may be seen that this life is thus in the care of God according to the believing man's own choice. The protection of this kindly and powerful Providence is not

thrust upon him, as something outside his own wishes or efforts. He desires and chooses it for himself. This is implied in the whole language and temper of the Psalm. When one speaks thus gratefully and trustfully,—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and when he says, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," the consent and choice of the heart are in it. He wishes and means to have it so. The confidence, too, which is here expressed is in the nature of it a sentiment exercised and cherished by the man himself. If we trust in God, the trust is ours, and must be. If the Shepherd leads the sheep, and they follow safely after him, the following at least is theirs. It is the sheep that follow. This part is therefore for us. We must be ready to follow; and we must be following.

It would not do therefore for anyone to be thinking only of the power and goodness of the Shepherd, and of the safety and joy of a life watched over in all its parts by him, if he did no more than think of it; if he did not trustfully and thankfully place his own life under this great and gracious guidance. This

it is for us to do. If you see to-day, any of you, something of what it might be to have the Lord for your Shepherd, and to be cared for in all your life by Him, and if you have not placed yourself by your own full and hearty choice under His care and guidance, do not let this indispensable condition of the good that you see and desire be any longer delayed or neglected. Take up these words of faith as your own. Say now for yourself, with clear acceptance and purpose of heart,—"The Lord is my Shepherd."

Now it is to be observed that this safe and cheerful life of chosen trust in God is a life in the ways of righteousness. The Psalmist says; "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." The "name of God" is rightly interpreted in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, as signifying in a connection like this, all that by which God makes Himself known. God's name is that by which He discloses Himself or causes Himself to be distinguished or recognized as God. God's concern for His name signifies the carefulness He has that the things spoken or done as by

Him shall truly represent the essential rectitude of His own character and being. Thus it is becoming to Himself that He should lead in ways of holiness those that trust in Him. To lead them in other ways would be to distort and reverse the unchangeable verity of His own eternal life. So deeply are fixed the rules of righteousness for man.

So it is that those green pastures and still waters of refreshment and rest are not in the lands of sin, and cannot be. The safety and joy of the life here spoken of consist in their very nature chiefly in this, that such a life is kept by a holy God in ways of holiness. Therefore it is hopeful, therefore it is bright, secure and prosperous, because it is not outside the shining bounds of duty and love, and because it is held forever by the hand of God and by choice of its own in the paths of righteousness. It belongs to us to walk in these ways with carefulness and with thankfulness, both together.

And now we find that this trustful, hopeful, safe and holy life, guided of God and with man's own choice and effort in it, is a life that

comes at length to a perpetual home in the house of the Lord. It reaches its conclusion, or the place of its endless continuance in some special and blissful nearness to God. It is a divine life through all the way, and it is everywhere in the presence of God, but it comes at last in some peculiar manner to be with Him as if in His own house and home. We are not forbidden to think that there may be, even for the most high God who inhabits His creation, such a home—the central abode of warmth and glory, or many such—into which are gathered for long continuance the faithful men who inherit the promises.

It may be that the writer of the Psalm did not have distinctly in mind when he used these words any such dwelling-place of God and of faithful men with Him,—as if in Heaven. But he surely meant to speak of a strong desire and hope he had concerning his dwelling forever where the most might be seen and known of God. It may be that there was at first in his mind the house of God, or the place of His special worship at Jerusalem, or wherever it may then have been. But it has always

been easy for the believing man to pass in his thought from the earthly place and state of worship to the heavenly. Thus by the "house of God" we ourselves might mean either the one or the other. They are not far unlike. What is here foretold is that as the believer's life goes on and grows to its fulness it reaches at last a state in which it is peculiarly near to God in love and trust and worship and in likeness of spirit, and a state in which it enjoys peculiarly the manifestations of the being and character of God.

Our present acts of worship as we come here to this house of God, help us forward to such a stage of life, and our coming finally to it may fitly be called a dwelling in His house forever.

Thus every trusting man, though he may be much cast down by trials, and hindered and put back by oppositions and by sins, will come at length to a state in which he will rejoice altogether in the love, holiness and blessing of God, and in the hearty service which he is permitted to render forever to Him.

So we have in this Psalm a kind of summary

of the Christian believer's life. God leads him, with comfort and safety and rest, in ways of righteousness, to His own presence, and to the full knowledge of Himself, and the full joy of endless life with Him. The believing life begins as this Psalm does with the saying —"The Lord is my Shepherd;" it ends as this Psalm does with an entrance upon a perpetual dwelling in the house of the Lord. Thus ever may the paths of earth draw nigh to the doors of Heaven. Thus does this Psalm abide along the shifting earthly generations of believing men—known by heart—a psalm of distant memories and far-coming hopes. Thus it may still be borne in remembrance by those who have passed to the lands of immortality. They may still sing or repeat with united voices the familiar strains, changing alone the words that mark the passing time. So to-day they say,— "Yea, though I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death, yet have I feared no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy do follow me all the days of my life, and I am dwelling in the house of the Lord

forever." Thus may we gather within ourselves the everlasting harmonies, whose notes we faintly hear, and in this very hour may we all begin or renew this Psalm, this song of faith, hope, and love and of endless life.

Perhaps you may think that a life of such steadfast rest and hope is above you and beyond your reach. Then it should be said that this is a picture of the life you should aim at and toward which you should direct your desires and thoughts. It is not meant that the view should discourage you, even though you see it far above you. It is meant to give you hope and strength while you look upon it. Take to yourself the faith, the hope, the strength. You will not fail to reach and to renew and repeat within yourself all that the Psalm contains. Our walking along the paths of life is with slow steps, and it may be with much stumbling. The songs of life rise into the air above us, and they go smoothly. But it is best to hear the songs.

The most precious things of human life are born of such faith and hope as this Psalm records. In our times the close relation be-

tween the life of man and the life of all the animal tribes about us is much in our thoughts. Misgivings may sometimes come upon us lest there should seem to be nothing to distinguish our destiny from theirs. In many things the life of man is indeed of the earth, and is earthy. It is linked in origin and nurture with all the life of the surrounding world, and it may seem likely to be appointed to share the general frailness and to fall beneath the universal mortality. But in the soul of man and even in the bosom of nature, there are kindlings of powers that will grow imperishable. These psalms, all the long reviving records of faith and hope are the signs with man of discernments and destinies beyond the present time. They reveal his fellowship with the everlasting Righteousness and his kinship with the eternal Life.

In all scientific or natural induction and forecast concerning the endurance and destiny of human life these facts,—these psalms of life, are to be included and reckoned on. It is not reasonable that they should be left out. Man is not only an animal that is born and

eats and grows and works and rests and dies. Man is an animal singing songs of rational and endless hope. He is likely to reach to an answering destiny. It may agree no more with the steadfast counsel of nature that the dust of an earthly body should return to its kindred dust than that a soul, singing songs of everlasting consolation and gracious hope should ascend to its dwelling with the Father of spirits. These psalms, all the recorded holy confidences of man help to sustain the inmost hopes of man. They uphold the trust which they express. The vein of imperishable hope they bear is itself a rational ground of hope. Thus these sacred histories of human life, these psalms, of themselves cast a light along the paths of the earth, and across the valley of the shadow of death. Thus with reason, faith nourishes faith.

So our faith is strengthened with reason as we walk with faithful men. So too our own faith may uphold with reason the faith of other men that walk with us. Thus too as we walk with faith in the paths of righteousness we strengthen within ourselves the present pow-

ers of immortality, and we obey the solemn and lofty word which bids us lay hold upon an eternal life. If you would have your soul to live, learn the songs of hope.

You may consider too, that in these psalms, and in much besides of all these sacred records, God speaks to you out of the hearts and lives of men. You have not only His own word of promise and welcome, but you have besides these lofty and grateful sayings of your companions in life who have made trial of His guidance and love. You have them both together. This Psalm is the word of God, but it is the word of man. It is the word of God entering into the life of man, and becoming the word of man. So these psalms are songs concerning God in the speech of men. We hear together in them the voice of God and the voices of those who have loved and trusted Him. The sweetness and hope of life are in this alliance of life with God.

These things are for you. Take to yourself this promise, this security, this gladness, this righteousness, this continuing and eternal nearness to God. Try it for yourself. Learn for

yourself these songs of trust and hope. Learn to make them. You should do more than to repeat with your lips the songs that other men have made. You should learn to sing songs in your life. It is better that your life should sing than that it should be only heavy and dumb. Your life should sing of faith and hope so that others will hear the songs and learn them of you. Your life should be a life of psalms.

Begin the psalm by saying now for yourself—"The Lord is my Shepherd." Then you may go on continually to say—"I shall not want; goodness and mercy shall follow me, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Thus may "He who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

III

PRAYER

III

PRAYER

Matthew 7:7. Ask and it shall be given you.
Matthew 6:10. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

THE Bible is to be used with the best use of our human reason. The sayings of the Bible concerning prayer need to be considered in their connection, and in relation to their particular purpose. They need often to be compared, one with another. The sayings of the Lord Jesus have need also to be compared with His own recorded prayers, and with His own conduct in relation to prayer.

The first of these two texts might make us think that we might pray for anything that we desired, and expect to have it. The second text would lead us to conclude that the thing first to be prayed for is that the will of God Himself might be recognized as supreme throughout the whole earth. Holding these

things in mind, I purpose to make some remarks upon the Reasonable Use of Prayer.

I. I remark first—it is desirable that human affairs should be ordered of God: that is, that the will of God should be done in the earth. God reigns in the earth not altogether by His own inherent and unalterable supremacy, but in part, also, by the free choice of men upon whom He has bestowed the powers of choice. Looking thus in our freedom upon it, we see that it is best altogether that He should reign in the earth. God can direct in human affairs better than any man could do it. He knows the world better. He knows men better. He is more wise, more just, more gracious. He has a steadier and better purpose.

We can understand a little what confusion would fill the earth if the ordering of things were left to any man, or any group of men —or if it were left to us. So far as there is choice with us, we should surely pray with all our hearts that the will of God might be sought out, respected and followed throughout the whole earth.

II. It is natural and proper to pray to God. Our thoughts of God and of our own necessities impel us to pray. Most men do pray—to some extent and in some manner. If there is a Universal Spirit, upholding all things, and the source of all life, it is natural that men whose lives are from Him should have desires which they would wish to present before Him. It is likely too, if He is wise and gracious, that He will be willing that men should do it. It is not likely therefore, whatever else may be said, that prayer will ever cease to be made.

If indeed prayer did harm to those that pray, or to any one else, or if certain kinds of prayer did harm, then we should need to be careful how we prayed. And we do need to be careful. But I think we know that when we pray, or try to pray, aright, our praying tends to make us better in body and soul, in business and in character. I think we understand that if we were to pray more than we do, or if we were to be in a trustful and prayerful spirit more than we are, it would be better for us and better for all other men with

whom we have any dealings. We need not fear to pray.

III. God is able to answer prayer. It cannot be needful to stay much upon this. The Being who made all things and in whom all things consist, whose intelligence and power run together through every mass and every atom of the creation, and penetrate every order and form of life within it,—this Being must be able to show regard to the desires of His human children if it seems wise to Him to do it.

But now difficulties begin to arise. It is said that the eternity of the being of God and the eternal foresight of God must make it impossible that changes should ever occur in the plans of God, and impossible that prayer should have any effect with God. And these things may be too high for us. They are too high. But if they are too high for us then we need not, from our lower lines of thought, feel ourselves obliged to endeavor to ascend to the realms above us in an effort to solve the difficulties which were only brought to our sight while we were trying to explore

the regions that are too high for us. The effort to solve these difficulties is no more vain than the effort to create them.

And we do not know, and cannot know, and do not believe that the eternal being of God is of such a nature as to throw all the free will of God back into an undiscoverable and immeasurable past. And we do not know, and cannot know, and do not believe that the foreknowledge of God is of such a sort as to darken or obscure the present intelligence of God. It is far otherwise with God. The eternity and omniscience of God are a portion of His greatness. He is not fettered by His greatness nor blinded by His infinite wisdom. God would not be bound, so far as we know, to exercise His foresight at every point, if at any point, for any cause He should choose not to do it.

Besides, and this may be more to the purpose for us—we do not find that even among men foresight hinders freedom. The man that can plan best is most resourceful and free as the times draw nigh. And even by this fainter light we may judge that the far-shining omniscience of God does not hinder His walking

at liberty in the ways which He Himself may choose.

IV. It may now be observed further that the works of God in nature are carried on usually, and it may be always, in a systematic manner and according to general laws, and the relation of prayer to general natural laws must be considered. The laws of nature appear, often, in the relations of cause and effect. Causes are signs of what is about to be done.

It is plainly best for us that God acts in nature according to general rules. If He did not act in an orderly and regular way no one could count on His actions. All planning with men would cease if God had no such plans. The laws of nature are marks of the wisdom and goodness of God. They are not to be broken or disregarded by any man who means to honor God.

Practically too, our common lives are to be shaped in accordance with what we know of the laws of nature. It is not suitable for us to disregard them and then pray to God to help us in spite of them. We must keep God's

laws as best we can, and then pray. If a man has hay in his field that is fit to be brought into his barn, and he sees signs of a coming storm, he should not stand in his doorway and pray that the storm may be scattered or turned aside. He should go out into the field and bring his hay into that barn as quickly as he can. As to bodily health, a man should not be careless as to how he lives and then pray to God to keep him well. He should rather pray to God to help him to be careful and to help him also to keep a cheerful and trustful and health-giving mind.

We are not to expect that God will do unreasonable things for us in answer to prayer. If we pray rightly we shall try also to be reasonable, and to use practical good sense in what we do.

V. Now we must consider what answers there might be to our prayers, and what answers we may properly desire and expect.

Answers to prayer may be of several sorts. (1) By mental, moral or spiritual results within the man himself who prays. (2) By such results with some other person for whom

prayer is offered. (3) By results in the course of outward nature in the interest of the person praying, or (4) by such outward results in the interest of some other person or persons in behalf of whom prayer was offered.

The results prayed for in the first two cases are mental, moral or spiritual; in the last two these results are in the conditions of outward nature.

These results first-named are by far the most important, though we may not always think of them as such. Nothing about ourselves can concern us so much as the state of our minds, our character, our souls. Nothing about our friends can be of so much interest to us as these same conditions with them. The main things with us and with our friends, are the states of our minds and hearts toward one another, and toward all our fellow men, and toward God.

It is plain too, at once, that God must be able to act upon the minds of men in answer to prayer if it seems wise to Him to do it. There may be hindrances to the effectiveness of divine action upon the minds of men in the

free will which God Himself has given to man. Or there may be hindrances in other opposing influences, or in adverse conditions which it would not be wise for Him to remove or change. But that God has access to the minds of men we cannot doubt. We can move upon one another's minds—sometimes, it may be—by what we call telepathy, without visible speech or any motion. But God is more near than that. He is not far from every one of us. The gates of the soul are not shut fast against Him. He is Himself "the God of the spirits of all flesh."

It is plain, too, with respect to these results of prayer within the minds of men, that there is not the same need that they should be announced by signs in the visible world that there is with respect to results within the outward world itself. That is to say, there is no obvious necessity that the movements of God within the human soul should be in accordance with laws open to general observation; while there is such a clear necessity with respect to the movements of God in the processes of outward nature. If a storm might

come any day suddenly, and without any sort of warning, and along with a cool northwest wind as well as with a northeast wind or a damp wind from the south, or if a stone cast out into the air might be as likely to fly up as to fall down, or if one might be as likely to be sick if he were careful as if he were careless, and if such lawlessness ran through all nature, then all nature would be spoiled for man. But nothing like this happens when moral or spiritual changes take place in the soul of man. An intemperate man may become sober, and the order of the family and the neighborhood is not disturbed, but rather promoted. If there should be a revival of true religion in this community, no disturbance of any grievous sort would follow here, or in any part of the town; but on the contrary, all life would move on more evenly and smoothly and happily than before. Changes for the better in the souls of men are invisible in themselves, and they have no need to be seen except in their good results.

There are no doubt laws governing such changes within the souls of men. But they

are moral laws. The signs of such changes might be thoughtfulness and penitence, confession and prayerfulness; and following after them thankfulness, and joy in the Lord's work and in the Lord's church, and more steadfast walking in the right ways of life. But it is clear that in the order of outward nature there need be no natural hindrance to the power of God in giving such answers to prayer, offered either for one's self or for any other person.

And now we can see further that very great and desirable outward results may easily follow from such mental or spiritual changes with men. So that such answers to prayer as were put into the last two of the four classes of answers just spoken of, may in many cases be brought about by those spiritual touches within the mind itself. If there were a man intemperate, or idle and shiftless, or sullen and violent in temper, and if in answer to prayer that man should become temperate, industrious and prudent, and kindly, cheerful and gracious, that would be quite as great a blessing to that man's wife and children as if in answer to prayer his crop of potatoes had

been made that year supernaturally large or the horse that he had abused and neglected had kept supernaturally well. It is so in a wide range of matters. And in truth a very large part of all the outward things that are to be desired depend, more or less completely on mental, moral and spiritual influences within the minds of men. If the souls of men were touched with every grace, the desert of the earth would rejoice and blossom as the rose. There is range enough for prayer through the clear regions of character and moral life.

But we might look farther in this direction. Apart from the great matters of character and moral life, God might, if it pleased Him to do it, make mental suggestions in answer to prayer, of things desirable to be done or left undone. He might cause the physician or nurse to see what had not been seen before, of the sick man's trouble, and of the remedy for it, or He might put helpful thoughts into the sick man's own mind. Or He might give watchfulness and coolness to the captain or the pilot of the ship, in the perils of the storm.

Or in the dark hour of battle He might touch the mind of the commanding general with sagacity and resolution, and fill the hearts of his soldiers with courage. It has not been seldom in the course of history that invisible powers have been thought to be drawing nigh to man. So perhaps the shade of Theseus passed amid the Grecian ranks at Marathon.

I have already said, for substance, that the course of outward nature is wisely laid out under general laws, which we ought to observe, and to which our conduct should be conformed. I do not know whether these laws are ever turned from their course by prayer. But since there may be those who are ready too lightly to scoff at the possible power of prayer in nature, I will add some further thoughts bearing upon that possibility, and will follow them with some widening moral considerations.

It is in no wise naturally impossible that the desires of men should move directly upon the great powers of nature—which are the powers of God. The powers of God in nature are swift and silent. They are invisible as a

thought. They run in quick vibrations from orb to orb, through all the matter of the universe. They sustain it in all its forms and surround it in all its motions. It can scarcely be doubted that they take some conscious hold on every desire and thought of man. These desires and thoughts of men are then in some manner felt by the mighty power itself that lays hold upon them. It is not to be believed that they are felt and made effective as mere force or eagerness of desire. That in man is strong with God that is in fellowship with the sacred purposes that occupy and adorn the life of God. It is not hot desire, alone; it is a sympathy, rather, with the everlasting harmonies that fill the being of Him who sits at the center of universal existence. We may find, perhaps, some dim analogy in the ways in which we are beginning, ourselves, to speak through wide spaces in the air above us. It is not the mighty noises that are heard. It is the finely attuned vibrations, that single each other out, and answer like to like across the far spaces. So is prayer with God. We cannot tell how far it may reach. But we

may know that the strong effective prayer is the prayer of reverence and trust. It is the still small voice of lowliness and submission, touched with hope. It is the sympathy of the heart with the wisdom and fatherhood of the great God.

Such prayer is answered in whatever comes to pass. I think that there are cases in which the outward thing desired is reached. But in the best prayer this outward thing falls a little away from sight; and the sacred fellowship with God fills the mind.

It lies within the power of God to bring us the outward answer that we desire. It may lie within His wisdom to do it, or it may not.

We need also as we pray to have respect to what we may learn concerning the mind of God from His own natural laws as they appear to apply to the conditions in which we are placed. The most devout men as they come near to the end of life do not usually pray for recovery to health. They pray with warm affection for their friends, and with lowliness and thankfulness and trust for themselves.

The *faith* with which we should pray is not the belief that we can have and must have the very thing that we think we need. That would be no faith in God; it would be only a blind and wilful faith in ourselves. Men sometimes pray as if it were the part of God to do what they might wish Him to do. This would make the Most High God to be only an almighty doer of the will of men. He would have need to be the doer of the will of every man, as men came crowding before Him. He would come down thus from His lofty place of wisdom and of supremacy—and in that darkening hour the divine creation would roll back into chaos. But no such disaster will ever befall the creation, over which the Almighty God bears rule. When we pray, we bring our desires into His presence in hope and love and trust, and leave them there gratefully with Him.

It may be that, even as believing men, we undervalue in our thoughts the reasonableness that is with God. The great Apostle said: "Now abideth faith, hope and charity or love, but the greatest of these is love." Following in that thought it has been notably said in our

own day that love is the greatest thing in the world. Paul was speaking of the principles that should control the life of men, and of these love is foremost. But in the wide universe of God, and with God Himself, it may not be altogether the same. Love abideth eternally with God Himself, while to our human thought faith and hope may pass away. Love has its seat forever in the bosom of God. But so does Law. So does Wisdom—the great discerning, balancing, ordering power of reason. The Bible says that God is love. It also says that God is light. One of the sacred writers, in a majestic passage, has represented Wisdom as declaring of herself that she was in daily companionship with God when the worlds were made. To our most reverent thoughts, though we behold only from afar off, it might appear that Wisdom—the distinguishing and balancing light of reason—must hold a central place among the perfections of God. In reason was the creation determined upon and ordained. In reason were these material worlds established and their circles run. In reason were laid the boundary lines of the

moral creation. By reason were fixed the borders of truth and righteousness—the lines and laws that should bind the lives of all the rational children of God. By reason the warmth of love was chosen and kindled, and love itself was set in its place of glory. Our human reason is a dim but sublime reflection of the reason of God. Around His throne the lights of reason shine unshadowed. It is with reason that our faith and hope and love rest on God, and that we bow down and worship before Him.

It is into the presence of this Being, crowned with these golden lights of reason and love, and girded with befitting power, that we come when we pray. If we can render some honor to Him, and can enter a little into His glory and His peace, that may well fill our thoughts.

We may ourselves have often wondered what we should pray for if we were to be brought, distinctly to our knowledge, into the very presence of God, and were assured that we should receive exactly that for which we might ask. In such an hour should we ask for riches — for ourselves — for our children?

Should we ask for ease—for freedom from labors or care? Should we ask for distinction and honors? May it not rather be that, at such an hour, gathering our thoughts, we should say, "Our Father who art in Heaven," and should find our first desire to be that His name might be hallowed and that His kingdom might come and His will might be done in all the earth, even as in heaven? And for ourselves we should speak, I think, of bread, of the daily strength we need for the work of life, of the forgiveness of sins, of steadfast kindness of heart toward our fellowmen, and of guidance away from the paths of evil.

To this end come happily, in reverence and trust and love, our thoughts of God and of prayer. And if we can seek first these things, we may know that such other things as we need will be provided for us.

IV

GOODNESS AND GREATNESS

IV

GOODNESS AND GREATNESS

Ephesians 5:9. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

Ephesians 6:10. Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Job 32:9. Great men are not always wise.

In the first of these verses goodness, righteousness and truth are spoken of as fruits, or results of a moral sort, produced by the working of the Spirit of God upon the hearts and lives of Christian believers. The second text is an exhortation to be strong in the Lord; and here the stress lies on force and steadfastness in goodness. In the third text, from the book of Job, we have brought to view the quality of vigor or power as existing apart from wisdom, and apart thus from goodness. Men may be great and not wise. They may be in some manner intelligent, resolute and strong, without having that practical wisdom which would enable them to direct rightly their own lives. And it is not difficult in fact to find such men.

We may take these passages together as bringing before us the two qualities of goodness and greatness in men; and of these I purpose to speak. I shall make some explanations respecting them and some remarks upon the relation which they bear to each other.

Goodness may be defined as a right disposition or purpose controlling the life and entering into the character. Goodness is the settled aim or quality of right living. Goodness involves a right state of feeling within ourselves, and a right acting in accordance with that, and with respect both to God and men. These two, right feeling and right acting, go together. Feeling moves us to what we do, and our doings react upon our feelings and quicken and strengthen them. These two things are inseparable. No one can be good unless he is doing good as he has opportunity. The gaining of goodness impels to action and requires it. Accordingly, it begins to appear from the first, when goodness is thought of as full and thorough, and as covering all the powers of life, that whosoever should be alto-

gether good would be great, or so far great as his capacities and opportunities would allow. He would be always endeavoring to do what he could in the best manner, and this would tend to make him great.

But greatness must now be looked upon, to see what it is. Greatness is power in thinking, feeling, and acting. We call a man great who can perceive clearly and who can compare or think quickly and comprehensively, and who can resolve and act with vigor, steadiness and effect. The end he has in view, or the moral quality of what he does we may let pass to a large extent out of mind. Thus renowned generals and conquerors are reckoned as great men. And men who are successful in carrying out their purposes in politics or government, or in business, are thought of as great, without much respect to what may be the nature or quality of the purposes they follow. In all these cases there is a greatness of intellect or of will, or of both combined, the heart and conscience being set aside.

It need not be denied that such greatness is real, so far as it goes. There may be with

a man wonderful clearness of discernment in some things or wonderful energy of accomplishment, or both together, while he has neither love nor care for his fellow-creatures, nor for God. Such a man may be selfish and unscrupulous, yet sharp and clear and strong. He is likely to be in some repute too, for his sharpness and strength. There is a natural tendency in us to render a certain homage to clearness and vigor of mind, and to brilliancy and success in action, without thinking much of the moral quality of what is purposed and done. And there may be in fact a real greatness of a certain kind, separate from goodness, and found even in bad men.

Yet greatness is not genuine and complete if it does not take account of what is good. A man of a strong, clear and well-balanced mind, should have discernment of the duties he owes to God and to man, and should see how important it is that they should be discharged. He should thus have thought upon things moral and religious, and he is not a thoroughly strong and well-balanced man if he does not. And if he does not follow these

thoughts into right feeling and action, he will be dwarfed and shortened and made small upon all that side of his life. Real clearness and force of mind join on thus with goodness. As before, when we were getting the definitions or boundaries of goodness, we saw how it ought to lead to greatness, so now when we are looking at the boundaries of greatness, we see how it ought to lead to goodness. The two qualities are plainly not far apart, and goodness appears to be indispensable to genuine and full force of life.

But passing on further in the way of definitions and explanations, we may see that there is a large class of qualities, entering very prominently into the formation of a strong character, that are situated in some manner between goodness and greatness, in the usual sense of those words, that yet lie heavily over on the side of goodness. Self-control is one of these qualities, a power of reserve and patience and self-possession. This enters in a most remarkable manner into the highest order of executive capacity and achievement. In the critical periods of history, and in the great

prosperous struggles for human liberty, leadership has commonly fallen to those calm, balanced men, unlike to what may be sometimes lightly thought.

Alfred of England was such a man, toiling and warring and waiting for the enlightenment and the safety of his country, before the dawning almost of her splendid day had begun to shine. Hampden was such a man, cut off before it could be surely known to what scope in vast emergencies his great powers might reach. William the Silent was such a man. It was by such a temper that he was fitted to be the leader of his people through the long opening years of the dreadful contest for the independence of his country, and for the liberties of Europe. He stood in this patience of heart, in this central steadfastness of soul, while the ceaseless storms beat upon him. The destinies of nations turned there upon that firmness and solidness of personal character, as upon a pivot of steel or of diamond.

There were kindred traits of character in that man of our own nation whom we call the Father of his country; and it was by

reason of them, in large part, that he gained the name he bears. I am not sure that Alfred the Great or William the Silent or Washington were men of the very highest order of purely intellectual greatness. But they were of the very great men. As to services rendered in the handling of secular affairs, and in a governmental or public line, I suppose it might be maintained that these three are the three most illustrious names among men. It was by reason of the powers largely moral within them that they rose to this distinction. General Grant was a man in some respects of the same type,—silent, self-contained, self-poised, patient, steadfast, and irresistible in his patience and steadfastness. So always, these self-governing powers wherever they are found, though lying largely on the side of goodness, make for greatness.

The disposition or power of self-sacrifice is another of these qualities, which lie in some manner between goodness and greatness, but yet belong mostly along with goodness. Bad men may be occasionally and in some things self-sacrificing, but at the bottom of their

hearts they are selfish. The self-sacrificing spirit is the essential element in all heroism, that is, in all greatness of that highest and most animating kind. Where this is lacking in a man, otherwise clever-minded and strong, it puts at once a certain mark of meanness and belittlement upon him. If we discover plainly concerning any man, that he has a selfish motive in all or the most of what he does, we instinctively set him down as a man of a low, poor, and narrow mind, whatever other strength he may have. We call him a "small" man. On the other side, lives which are in many respects not strong, and which have seemed inconspicuous, are lifted up in our thoughts, if this strain of self-forgetfulness is seen within them.

It is important too, to remember, that this element of greatness of which we are speaking, is not of necessity, nor commonly, a thing of flashing suddenness, that appears only on rare occasions. In the best lives the power of self-sacrifice passes into the habit of a just balancing between one's own distinctly personal interests and the welfare of one's friends

and neighbors, and the general good of the whole public, and of mankind. That which is but narrowly personal takes its place of subordination or of helpfulness toward these wider interests. This is not then a matter of sudden exigencies, but of daily life. Our fellow men may not fall continually at our side into the water or into the fire, that we should rescue them at risk to ourselves, and great public dangers may not arise each year, as from treason or foreign violence, that we should stand up in the sight of all men and beat them off. But our fellow men are always with us, and the land and the world are open before us, and we may contribute whatever we can, and with whatever labor or cost we please, toward the general welfare.

Many persons who might endure to be heroic upon a sudden or single occasion, are not able to do this work of a steady and unselfish common life. This is the best trial of a true spirit. The uncomplaining, steadfastly gracious mother in her home, the constantly faithful and patient teacher, weekdays or Sundays, in her room or class, may be greater than

the men who take cities. It is more to rule one's spirit than to take a city. This is a path to greatness that is open to you all.

We might observe too, concerning Washington, and William the Silent and Alfred, that they were heroic, not chiefly in the way of single and startling acts of self-devotion, but in this other and better way of a clear and considerate acceptance of their own due place and work of life. Thus, although their opportunities and their responsibilities were most unusual, yet their moral greatness was of that kind which ought to appear and might appear in all common life. It was an *enlarged common greatness,* if we may so describe it. Most of the best greatness that the world has ever known has been of the same sort, with respect to the moral qualities that have marked and made it. The courses of action by which in critical times the welfare of mankind has been signally advanced will surely appear, when they are considered in their moral relations, to be no more than the discharging under such circumstances, of the common obligations of life. Sometimes we wonder that such things

should seem uncommon or great. But all dutifulness and self-devotion are great, and when the powers and principles that are or ought to be common, are seen to hold steadfastly in their place under hard pressure of outward occasions, then they can be seen to be, what they always are, high and great. I presume you may sometimes have wondered with respect to Washington, why he should be regarded as so uncommonly great. He seems only to have done on any particular occasion, exactly that which any sensible person ought to have done. But if any one of you will do on every particular occasion that which any sensible person ought to do, you will become uncommonly great,—though your greatness may not be seen at once afar off, like that of Washington.

The defects or failure of great men, or men in many respects great, may also show us the place and worth of these powers or habits of considerate self-devotion. There is a lasting luster upon the name of Cromwell; but it would have been a purer luster, if there had not seemed to be wanting in him somewhat

of that clear and balanced disinterestedness which ran central through the characters of William the Silent and of Washington. Napoleon failed in life greatly, because such moral qualities were lacking in his nature.

Now we must see that these midway qualities, as I have called them, run everywhere close to goodness, and that they are, comprehensively, little else than the signs or the traits of goodness. We see, too, that these same qualities make up a large part really of greatness. Greatness does not mean merely power to move directly upon others, as by force of will or pure intelligence. It means power, first to control one's self, to possess one's own spirit, and to hold one's self in due place in all that one does with respect to the rights and the wishes and the welfare of all other men. And the control or influence which one man may have over another, which is a measure or mark of greatness, depends fully as much upon the possession with that man of these self-governing and self-devoting powers, as upon force of will or of intelligence.

Next to Washington among our Presidents,

—and on the same level perhaps with him—Abraham Lincoln holds the strongest influence upon our people. This is not because he was stronger intellectually than all the rest, whatever the fact may have been in that respect. It is because he was thought to have devoted himself with some peculiar heartiness and singleness of purpose to the service of his country during the dark and laborious years of his office. Then he was kindly and sympathetic; he could weigh the wishes of other men, and he could restrain his own. He was elastic in temper, yielding and steadfast both at once, —altogether patient and persuasive—till the hours of action came. There seemed, also, we may hardly know how, to be spread a certain pathos of a moral sort, over the last years of his life, even before they came to their sudden end. It was by such things, and not by bare greatness, that his power grew.

It is further to be considered with regard to those qualities of which we have spoken, that not only do they belong in themselves more closely with goodness than with greatness, in the narrow sense of that word, but that

goodness has besides a power or tendency to produce them or to quicken their growth. They incline to go with goodness, and goodness itself inclines to the forming and nurture of them.

He who has or desires goodness must set himself to the governing of his own spirit, and the possessing of his own soul, and to the turning of his efforts and the ordering of his life out of the channels of a narrow selfishness into the courses of duty and beneficence. Thus goodness will lead toward all that greatness which these high qualities of mind may bring, while greatness, in the narrower and poorer sense, may not cause them to be brought forth or sought for.

Then as to general strength of mind, we saw at the first that any one who is or means to be good must be bringing into use all his faculties of every sort in obedience to God, and in service to his fellow-men; and this will tend to make him strong. In other words, a good man is likely, indeed certain, on account of his goodness, to gain something in mental brightness and in capacity for accomplishment. I

know very well that this may not always appear to be so. There is a habit of speaking of persons of a certain type of character as "good," with a peculiar turn or inflection on the word good, the meaning of which is, that while these persons may be blameless and harmless in their lives, yet they are of a weak style of manhood, and do not amount to much. No doubt there is such a type of character. There are also wide differences of natural endowment among men. Some men are set out to be stronger than others; and some are weaker. So there may be a comparatively weak man, who may begin to gain goodness and grace in his heart, and who may not at once or soon grow to be energetic and strong. Yet it is true that with every person, rightness of feeling and of purpose *tends* to action, and thus to growth and enlargement of capacity. These results will become plain in time.

If you find two persons who are equals in capacity at the start, and with equal opportunities, and if one of them has been dutiful, and the other careless of duty, you will see that

the dutiful man has gained upon the other somewhat in mental brightness and capacity, as well as in soundness of character. It cannot be otherwise; and it is not otherwise. A right aim in life tends to thoughtfulness, and to the use and growth of power. It builds up manhood, or helps to do it. It puts breadth and elevation on life; and in the end it puts on strength.

Besides you must remember that elevation of character is of itself a great achieving power among men. I do not know but it is the greatest of all human powers playing on the earth. The more carefully you look over human life, the more you will see of the worth and force of moral soundness and genuine goodness of character. And the more you look, the stronger will be the sense you will have of the weight among men of these great qualities, as compared with all other forms of greatness.

Those of you who may have traced from early times the social history of the place where you live, or of almost any New England town, can hardly have failed to observe

what a mark has been made upon these communities by men of strong individuality and of fixed integrity of purpose and of character. To a large degree, upright men, fearing God, have fashioned our society. The influence of womanly life has been strongly felt on these lines of goodness. There have been many whose gentleness and charity and moral steadfastness have made them great, and whose remembrance is precious.

While we are measuring in such ways the results of life, and weighing the force of men, it must be considered that much of what may pass at first for greatness is unreal and false, even by the standards of capacity alone. For instance, a man may often gain some end in life, not by greater vigor or skill in pursuing it, but by casting off the restraints which other men feel while in the pursuit of it. He is not stronger than others, he is only more reckless. He is not greater, he is only worse. He will reach his ends by means which others would not stoop to use. A man may get rich, perhaps, by sharp dealings, more quickly than his neighbors. But if he does, it is not because

he is more capable than his neighbors; it is merely because he is less honest and less just. So as to politics and government, some one may gain high position perhaps, not by capacity altogether, but in part by intrigue and corruption, or by easy surrender of all convictions at the promise of promotion. The advancement thus gained is not altogether because the man is very able, but is in part because he is very crafty and perhaps very false. Temporary and apparent successes in life may often be gained more easily by one who has no concern for the means he uses. This is not strength that gains such successes; it is merely recklessness and dishonor. It is carelessness of honorable obligations that other men feel, and that these men ought to feel. These men are not so far smart men, they are merely bad men.

In much the same way a man may reach the ends he sets out for, by pushing with all his might for them, and neglecting other things which it was his duty to have cared for. This case is not quite like the other. The man may not have been directly unscrupulous and reck-

less in what he did, but he was reckless in what he did not do, and in leaving that undone. He gave nothing, or but little, in charity. He paid the smallest possible tax he could,—a payment that ought to be made with care indeed, but chiefly with thankfulness.—He bore no share in the general public burdens, or he bore the least he could. He left alone, all he could, the general labors that fall in every community upon some one. He left beneficence and public spirit to others. And thus, concentrating all his strength, selfishly and wrongfully, upon his own chosen purpose, he has been able to reach it, or get nearer to it, while other men who have not felt at liberty to neglect all these other things have not been able to push on so far in that one line. This does not show the forward man to be stronger than the rest; it only shows that he has put his strength narrowly on one thing, as they have not, and as he ought not to have done. So there might be a company of men set to carry each a certain load to a distant point, and one of the men might throw off the most of his load, and run forward and get to that

point first. But he has not taken his load there. Or a horse might break loose from his wagon, and run more swiftly to the end of his road. He gets there, but he has not drawn his load there. Those things are not signs of strength and accomplishing force in horse or man. They are signs with a man of a mean disposition to throw off his proper work, and get on in some way without doing it.

Much of what passes for success in life is of this poor sort. We have a phrase often applied with some approval to the man who makes this style of headway, of whom it is said that "he gets there." Perhaps he does get there. Perhaps he sneaks there. Perhaps he slips on there quick, as a snake through the grass. Perhaps though he has got there, he is no man after he is there. Look and see what a man has *done*. Consider the width of the swath he has cut, as well as the distance on one narrow line along which he has run. Measure his work by breadth all ways, and not by length one way only. See what the man has brought to pass. Count the wise and kindly words he has spoken. Mark the patience and courage

he has shown. Weigh the whole force of his life for the general welfare and for the honor of his God, and judge by this whether or not he is great.

This quality of discerning judgment is to prevail. Through considerations like these great changes often take place, with the passing of years, in the estimates that are formed of men with respect to power and accomplishment in life. Time, even in this world, and while men live, or after they are dead, revises and reverses often the judgments that were passed at first upon them. Time exposes much that was but specious and shallow, that went for greatness, and it brings to light elsewhere much of real greatness that at first was but little thought of. Still greater changes of this sort will take place, we are assured, in the world to come, and when all action and character are reviewed before God. He will then appoint for all men, with exactness and certainty, the repute in which they are forever to be held. This is the glory and crown of that future life, that its rewards and honors rest with evenness and exactness, and with un-

erring, unchangeable and unanswerable steadfastness upon those that deserve to wear them, and upon none besides.

All such considerations urge you to set out in the way of holiness and the fear of the Lord, which is the way of safety, and of final honor. The path is open before you all. You may not all be great in outward view, or as compared with others, which are things of small account. But you are all permitted and required to aim at, and reach, some worthy end in life. You can set out to love and serve God and your fellowmen. You can cast out of your heart all low and evil things. You can put into it as much as you please of that which is pure and high, and of good report. You can be patient and kind, faithful and steadfast in courage and hope, at home or at school, upon your farm or in your shop or store,—and you will be great. In this way of obedience and of love the Lord Himself will help you. He will give you grace and strength. You will grow strong both by what you try to do yourself, and by the favor and blessing of the Most High shining on you,—

you will grow in goodness, and you will be great.

I have spoken of examples. There is another Example. We have knowledge of One in whom goodness and greatness were so woven together that we scarcely ever speak of Him or think of Him as good alone or great. We think of Him as in all things full and perfect. We know of nothing more strong than His gentleness and grace. We know of nothing more lovely than His majesty and power. By both together He has turned the destinies of mankind, and is swaying the generations of men as no other man ever did. He rules today in heaven and on earth; and in the fulness of His grace and power He calls on us to follow Him and to be like Him. Behold the Way, behold the Leader, behold the hope of life in following Him.

It is specially important that you who are young should look rightly on these things. Young people are apt to be hopeful. Besides that, they usually hold, I think, a certain elevation of desire and aim and expectation. They hope for high things. This peculiarity

appears often in the papers read and the addresses made at the closing exercises of our schools. Any one who is much with young persons anywhere must see it. Young people are often heedless and irresolute, but they look naturally toward high things. There are many who speak of this upward-looking vision of youth, as if it belonged only with the inexperience and rawness of that opening period of life. They call it a thing of prospect only, and of poetry, a sparkling of the early dew, or a painting on the morning sky, which the fiercer beams of the midday sun must certainly burn or scatter.

I hope you will not believe it to be so. It may too often be true. But it is true too often, because these highest and most hopeful thoughts are forgotten, and turned from, and not because they are of necessity vain and illusory. If you will turn the course of your lives into ways of frivolity only, or into hard and eager and selfish grasping after pleasures or possessions or honors, unmindful of duty and of God, then indeed this early freshness will perish, as waters dry up that flow into a

desert. But the Author of your lives never meant that they should run into the desert, and you must not suffer it to be so. He means that you should be useful, that you should do and gain good, and that you should grow in goodness and truth, and in all that is shining and fair in human character. And you can do it. The troubles of life which you cannot escape, need not hinder you. By these and by a divine favor given with them, you may gain sometimes the most of good. Hold therefore upon the promise of the morning—this hope of early life. It is meant for a sign from God of some genuine good to which you may come, and which you should never leave off pursuing. Your best hopes need not fail. You must see to it that they do not fail.

No color of poetry will vanish from anything of real goodness and grace, as you follow after it, and come close upon it. Good things are better in the hand or the heart than they are afar off. Do not hear therefore those who tell you that life must be, for the most part, but hard, dry, and barren. Do not hear that within yourself which may sometimes tell

you so. Hear rather the promise of the Leader Himself of the holy, the faithful and the great:—Truly you shall be clothed in white raiment. Your name shall be in the Book of Life. You shall eat of the tree of life. You shall wear the crown of life. Your life will reach its crown. You shall be a pillar in the temple of God. There shall be given unto you the morning star. You shall overcome, and shall sit down on the throne of the Redeemer and King of men, as He also overcame, and is set down upon the throne of God.

These things can be reached from the earth. The lives that reach them and none besides, are worthy and great. I trust you will attain to these lofty things. I hope you will set forth today in Christian faith and hope and love to lay hold upon them.

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THE BLESSINGS OF RATIONAL EXISTENCE

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THE BLESSINGS OF RATIONAL EXISTENCE

Genesis 1:24, 26 and 27, and Genesis 2:7.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul.

In a great commemorative address of Daniel Webster, delivered at Plymouth in 1820, the speaker as he was about to close brought before his hearers in imagination the men of future times, anticipating their grateful entrance upon that theater of human life which the fathers here had in part prepared, and had transmitted to them; and he called for-

ward to these advancing generations of the future in words of salutation, enumerating also before them the blessings of the earthly and human inheritance which they in their turn were to possess. He made mention of "this pleasant land of the fathers," of its "healthful skies," and "verdant fields." He welcomed them to the blessings of good government and religious liberty, "to the treasures of science and the delights of learning,—to the transcendent sweets of domestic life, to the happiness of kindred and parents and children," and finally, "to the immeasurable blessings of rational existence, and the immortal hope of Christianity, and the light of everlasting truth."

Apart from whatever may belong distinctively to this particular portion of our country, or to ourselves as descended from any characteristic line of ancestors, there is a fulness upon which our thoughts must fasten, in this heritage of life itself, thus described, and upon which we in our succession have entered. Many of the specifications set forth by the orator in this inventory of life, are of

matters to which our thoughts are often directed in our public assemblies, and elsewhere, in our schools and households, and in the daily associations in which we are occupied. Two of the last three that are mentioned, "the immortal hope of Christianity and the light of everlasting truth," are the great and spacious themes that engage our attention in all our Sabbath observances. The other of the three, "the immeasurable blessings of rational existence," is a topic becoming to any sacred occasion, and well fitted in its nature to lead us to the most lofty thoughts and the finest emotions.

The passages which have been taken as the text, contain an account from the earliest pages of Scripture of the creation and endowment of man in rational existence. Man was made, by the purpose and act of God, in the image and after the likeness of God, his Maker. This image or likeness of God has respect to the great elements of personal and rational being. It includes whatever is peculiar to man in distinction from the other animal tribes created to occupy the earth.

We may look over this ground somewhat today, to see what is thus embraced in rational existence, and to learn what occasions it affords of thankfulness and reverence and serious hope. I ask your most thoughtful attention, —not for the weight of what I may say, but for the absorbing greatness of the theme itself, which I may bring but dimly before you.

Rational existence includes existence itself, and rises out of that. There is with man the fact or subsistence of being, beneath and besides its rational quality. We have an existence—rational.

If we consider this human existence beneath what belongs to its rational or personal parts, in its foundations, we shall see that there are successive layers of being, as they may be called, one beneath another, upon which our lives are resting, or of which indeed, our lives may be said to be composed or made up. Below what is rational we find, first the animal life, with its free and voluntary powers; next the natural organic life, pertaining both to animals and plants and reaching down to the boundary line between things living and

things that have no life. Then beneath all these we find the great structure or platform of material existence, including the matter, whatever it may be, of things living or dead. And of matter, account is to be taken of the energies within it, or acting upon it, by which it is moved, or held in place in bulk and form. Beneath these is the region of the forces, most subtle, that act among the invisible and almost unknown particles of matter, and determine the kind of substance it may seem to be, as hard, soft, brittle, elastic, transparent, solid, fluid, or other, and of many varieties and qualities. And beneath material existence, with all its forms and forces or capacities, and with all the life it sustains within it or above it, there is the foundation of created existence itself, by the reason or force of which all things are that otherwise would not be. Thus we reach, beneath the whole structure of existence, the purposing and ordaining power of God, unseen of us and unsearchable in its nature and subsistence, but penetrating and upholding all things.

Concerning the being of God, beneath all

other being, we are driven in our contemplations to think, and it is also declared in the Scriptures, that it must be a being having its foundations and resources within itself and self-sustained, and not like our being, resting on something besides itself. But of all this we know, in the sense of comprehending it, but little. And when we try to think of the reason why anything should be, rather than should not be, or why there should be anything, or on what it turns or rests that anything should be, or what would have been had nothing been, —we are confused and baffled, if not affrighted —we cannot stand with a steady mind upon this brink of being—the edge of extinction and universal nothingness. But there is being, however it came to be, or is; and we are of it. We *are,* ourselves, in the fact and substance of our existence, and with all our capacities of every sort.

This structure of our being may be compared to a building with its foundations covered from sight, and raised up through successive stories to the apartments of voluntary life and rational thought and affection. Be-

ginning at the lowest stories, we have thus, existence,—being, in a world of being; next, matter, with the powers or qualities of its atoms, by which they associate themselves together, and with the powers by which they move in masses, or in bulk together; next, rising higher, the strange powers of life, stirring in the smallest cells of plants or of our own bodily frames; next, the capacities of bodily movement and control, with sensible perceptions and judgments concerning it—the dawning of mental life—as with all the animal tribes,—and then the full opening of self-consciousness, with discernments of truths and causes, principles and ends, and with answering powers of choice and self-direction,—the lights of reason illuminating and guiding life; all these together constituting man in his rational existence.

The building is spacious, vast and high, as these first thoughts of it may show. These first reflections upon ourselves as existing, may awaken the sentiments of awe and dependence, and also it must seem, of reverence and gratitude.

To look a little further on these fundamental things concerning human existence, we may see that the distinction between ourselves as rational beings and the whole mass of existence about us, does not lie exactly in the fact that we have powers of thought and of will, for these are found everywhere in all matter of life about us. Forces—laws, powers of intelligence and choice run through every particle of matter in all the world. It might be more easy to see that everything in all the world consists of those intelligences and powers than to conceive that anything could be without them. All things do indeed live and move and have their being in power and knowledge. There is thought, there is consistent and enlightened purpose in the growth of a leaf, or in its fall to the ground, or in the cohesion and substance of a stone, as truly as in the speech and motion of a man. A cornfield is thus far as truly a rational assembly as a congregation of men. The difference is not in that there is reason in exercise in the one assembly and not in the other. But the difference, so far as we may know it, lies in this,

that in the cornfield the power and wisdom everywhere at work do not connect themselves in such a way with the individual plants of corn as to make those plants aware in themselves of what is taking place about them and within them, or in such a way as to give to the corn plant freedom or choice of action for itself. The living plant is constituted in some ways a center of force and direction—unlike the dead mass of the soil it grows from—but it is not constituted, so far as we know, an individual seat of self-consciousness and reflection. Power and intelligence are in the corn-plant; but the plant does not, so far as we know, intelligently possess the powers that are within itself. Man does in part, intelligently possess his own capacities. This is his distinction.

Elsewhere in nature, as far as we know, the powers and intelligences of nature are not consciously felt and weighed and reflected upon by the objects over which and through which they have sway; but in man to some extent they are. And man stands forth in nature a living and conscious being, able to

overlook and estimate somewhat, and able somewhat to control the power and life that are about him and within him. There has been appointed to him this peculiar store of knowledge and will. Man is a being realizing life. He is a being self-intelligent in part, free and reasonable and personal. These qualities as to man's rational being are gathered in the word *person;* and among the natural inhabitants of the globe, man is the only person.

But we have already seen that the whole natural world around us, and that part of nature that is within us, is full of thought and purpose and power, by which indeed it is everywhere penetrated, upheld, informed, and made to live and move and be. Reason declares to us dimly, though hardly doubtfully, that this natural and universal intelligence and power has also somewhere its seat of personal being, its abode of self-consciousness and judgment and freedom in choice and will. Revelation also declares it. The Bible opens its record with the announcement of this Personal Being, purposing, creating, fashioning and

upholding all things. In the beginning God created; and this was the generation of the heavens and the earth and all that they contain.

Thus we find our way in our thoughts to God, a rational personal being, in the likeness of ourselves, but with majestic and immeasurable enlargement and force of being beyond ourselves. And thus more decisively, directly, and appropriately, the Bible declares that God made man in His own image, in the likeness of God.

It is by these free and rational powers that we are in the image of God. We can survey in some degree ourselves and the things about us. We can judge in reason concerning principles and ends of action, and can weigh in freedom the motives and purposes of life. So we do in our own lives the same manner of things that were done by God Himself when in power and wisdom and fulness of purpose He created the worlds and created man.

These free and rational powers are also spiritual. God is a spirit, and the Father of our spirits; and as spiritual beings we are in His image and likeness.

I have thus drawn the general definitions of our human rational existence. Even in such outlines it must seem to us a thing great and high and precious, and indeed of immeasurable blessing. Now let us look rapidly at some particulars of capacity and action which belong to us as possessing a rational existence.

As rational beings we are in a peculiar manner possessors of all powers of nature and life that are beneath this level of what is rational. All nature and life are more to us because we have a rational nature. We can look down on all this expression of power and wisdom and being beneath us, and enjoy the sight; this is itself an immeasurable blessing. The corn plant lives; but we do not know that it has any distinct sense of satisfaction in its life. There is infinite skill in its structure and modes of growth and nourishment, but the corn plant never reflects gratefully or intelligently upon the fact. The ox and horse have larger capacities. They know their owner's crib and pasture, and their owner himself. They have powers of motion and of memory, and a range of discretion. But the most wise of oxen

never, we may believe, surveyed consciously his own being—as we now survey ours—or undertook to fix his place in nature, or reflect even on the growth of the grass or corn he ate. The owl does not shake the wisdom of his head and say: "This is a wonderful world. I must look out the deep things in it." The century living crow does not, that we know of, speak reflectingly to his fellows or to himself to say: "The storms pass quickly; we have no such snows now as in the years when I began to fly."

The animals have indeed in some directions sharp powers of mind; and we need not be careful at all now to draw any clear lines between their capacities and ours. But the space in range and scope between them and us is vast. They have, happily, many sources of enjoyment, but ours are fuller beyond comparison. The difference in this single respect is great, in the prospect we have over our lives and over all about us and beneath us. We have this lofty power of conscious discernment and appreciation, by which we make some pleasing use or appropriation of all the things

that we behold. This pleasing and appropriating use of nature and of all surrounding life takes place often almost unconsciously. I believe it occurs even with the most unthinking men, and is a source of satisfaction to them far beyond what they may ever have imagined. As rational beings we own our place in nature, and in all the world, with all that it contains; and the possession is of inestimable value.

The rational power of considering ourselves is a great blessing in our lives. This distinctive rational capacity has been much dwelt upon already, and it is only spoken of here to bring to mind the satisfaction its exercise gives. Who of us, even if we may not have thought much concerning it, would lightly lose the sense we have of ourselves as persons, human and rational? Who that has thought of it much would lose it for all besides that the world contains?

We have as rational beings many special capacities and exercises, which are, separately and together, of the highest worth. Some of these are found in part with the animal tribes beneath us; but in the main and in all their

widest range, they are distinctly human. We have sensations of many kinds, bringing perceptions of the things about us. We can give attention to them. We have capacities for continual and intelligent observation. We can make comparisons and reflections, and frame judgments upon what we observe or experience. We have remembrance, so that past experiences are not lost but carried onward with us; we have thus teachableness, capacity of progress and gain out of all present and past things. We have foresight—powers of expectation and calculation, powers of hope laying hold on all things possible and pleasing,—so that we enjoy and in a manner possess the future, along with the present and the past. We have knowledge of relations, of causes and principles. We are able to set in order proofs or arguments concerning what we know or expect. We can provide and direct concerning much that it is desirable to make to occur, or to hinder in its occurrence. We have authorities over the irrational inhabitants of the earth, and over the forces of nature, so that we are able to occupy and subdue the

globe and all that is on it. We can discern ends of effort and action, and pronounce upon their character, and choose the means appropriate for reaching them. We have imagination; we can set in new frames and lights, and in new combinations the pictures of everything that we have ever known or thought of; and the chambers of the mind may hang with figures, countless as the sands, fixed or shifting as the stars or the northern lights, and beautiful, enchanting, restful, or stirring and glorious, beyond all the reality of life, and above the scenes of the earth or the visible heavens. We have emotions, sympathetic awakenings of feeling along with perceptions and memories, reflections, hopes, purposes and imaginations of every sort, so that our minds are not forever dull as waters in a perpetual calm, but are lifted and stirred as a sea in the storms, or by the swelling of its tides. We have rational affections, appreciative and pleasing attachments to the very objects of nature about us, but especially to the persons like ourselves whose lives are cast along with ours. And hence, and to the end also that these

grateful sentiments may find more certain and continual exercise, we have rational companionships, opportunities of chosen and cherished and quickening intercourse with associates and friends, making rational life not solitary but social, multiplied in all its good, that we may walk in the reflected light of all the blessings that fall on those around us. We have moral sensibilities, discernments and appreciations of truths about duty and affecting character, with the pure, immeasurable and unchangeable satisfactions of obedience and love and righteousness. We have powers of faith, making discoveries beyond the senses or the full sight of the understanding, but revealing the substance and assurance of the things most to be hoped for. We have in this way foresights respecting a life beyond the present, above the range of nature, immortal and holy. We have lofty and impelling instincts of preparations that may be made and that should be made for this endless life, so that we need not fail and must not fail to enter safely and happily upon it. Thus is put upon our rational existence its crown of everlasting endurance.

Consider the mighty range and swiftness of the reason given to you. You can gather at this hour about you, almost as with a single mental grasp, the things that are, and that have been, and that are to come. You read at one glance the story of the pebble, and of the kindling and fading star. You sit in one moment at the feast of Belshazzar and by the table in the Mayflower cabin. You hear in one instant the roar of a hundred battles and the song at Bethlehem. You behold together the household circle, the graves green with the springtime grass, and the golden city enlightened and enlivened of God. Your rational soul can make for itself its home at once in all societies and all solitudes. Its flight to the uttermost parts of the earth is more swift than with the wings of the morning. And of this your capacity in reason it may almost be said, as of the vision of the Most High whose image you bear, that to its penetrating sight the darkness and the light are both alike.

Thus in all your rational life, upheld of God, you walk with God. The blessing of your rational existence is indeed immeasurable.

Lessons of gratitude and of stirring and reverent hope must be impressed upon us. I trust we have a sense of the joy and worth of the being given us, and of the obligations we owe to Him in whose likeness we are framed. We have had much experience year by year of the favor of God upon us in our land, and in the nourishing earth on which He has placed our lives. We have had our diligent cheerful labors upon our fields and in our shops and houses. We have had with the returning seasons the faithful seed-time and the harvest. We have had our grateful social and domestic engagements, and our public assemblies for worship in the Christian faith and the Christian hope. If we have had occasions of sorrow, these have belonged also to the being God has given us; and our sadness could not have been great if our human life were not full and precious. In all the course of our lives we may gratefully remember that we were created as the children of God, and that if we are not wholly false to ourselves we shall never be separated from His presence and power and grace and blessing.

I trust you will none of you be false to your rational being. You are a matter of the earth. You are above all the other orders of nature and of earthly matter. You are not a beast; you are not a tree; you are not a stone. You have the powers of consciousness and reason. You have the knowledge of truths and duties. You are at home in the midst of things invisible and immortal. You are a rational soul. Awakening responsibilities are on you. Your obligations answer to your rare and sacred heritage in life. You have a mind that can behold and choose. Take now your course of life above the track of the things that have not your far distant sight and your freedom. Have care for your way upon these highlands of being on which your feet are placed. Distinguish and exalt yourself, as you are distinguished and exalted of God. Keep from every darkness and stain the sacred image you bear of Him that made you. Draw nigh to God, as God is nigh to you. Set open now your soul to Him from whom all the springs of life come forth.

And forever let us give thanks before Him.

Forever let us worship and bow down before the Lord our Maker. Forever let all His works in all places of His dominion, bring Him blessing. Forever and ever let there be honor and glory unto the King eternal, incorruptible, invisible, the only God.

VI

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

VI

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

Genesis 17:1. And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

This declaration—"I am the Almighty God"—was made to Abraham for his assurance and comfort, that he might not doubt concerning the fulfilment of the promises of God that had been given him, and that he might be steadfast in his obedience. The almightiness of God is a fitting ground of comfort and hope and of reverent and steadfast service with all who know Him.

In every such endeavor to look upon the things of God the limitations and uncertainties of our human vision must be kept in mind. It would be unbecoming that one should speak at every point, or scarcely at any point, with positiveness and in a tone of unyielding and dogmatic assurance. Much that one might

say, another might question or set aside. Yet it is not therefore necessary that one should clothe every sentence in terms of doubt. It is understood that we both speak and hear as men, and as best we may. And the end in view is not here the setting of every thought upon lines of assured exactness, from which none could ever depart in the least degree —a thing impossible; but the end is that with every thought we may draw more nigh to God. If thus I could know while I speak that any of you were setting aside in your minds any words of mine and were putting in their stead words or thoughts to you more truthful and quickening, I should not grieve but rejoice. If a guide were attempting to lead a company of men among peaks and ranges of great mountains, he would not be concerned if each man of the company did not follow exactly in his steps nor look upon every prospect from the point he might choose. He would be concerned if any one failed to take in, in some manner, the far reaching views or to look upon the lofty eminences. What we now desire is that in whatever manner the

glory of the greatness of God may shine upon us.

Somewhat in the same way, it should be further said that while proofs concerning the omnipotence of God may be spoken of, yet proof in strictest sense is not everywhere intended and indeed it would not be everywhere possible. Reason is assuredly to be in every wise used. But the flight of reason in the midst of things eternal is not of necessity as the treading of a quadruped upon the ground. In the spiritual world within which man belongs proofs may be sometimes by sights and recognitions as well as by steps of logic. The thoughts which give strength and light and purity and hope and love within the soul are likely to be true, or not altogether false. Even as to the logical processes, every possible flaw in reasoning need not be over much dwelt on. Fragments may be broken from a great arch while the main sustaining stones are strong.

But in this land of our souls, all things are not builded as of heavy matter, as it were of stones that feel forever the drawing of the

earth and are ready to fall. If we are cherishing at all the hopes and powers of immortality, there is a hold upon us as of gravity from above. An arch of crumbling and falling masonry may not more truly represent the aspirations and the securities of human life than the rainbow arch that rests upon the skies and the clouds and is builded of the light of heaven. So it is that with all our sober and hopeful thoughts we look for some rays of light from God.

The omnipotence of God is His ability to do all things: or His ability to do all things whatsoever He pleases. These two forms of statement, not exactly identical, are put forth thus together because together they lay hold upon the truth, and because some further remarks are to be made qualifying the meaning of both. When it is said that God can do all things there might easily come to mind certain apparent exceptions or limitations.

First there are things contrary to reason and in their very nature impossible to be done. Thus God cannot make the sum of one and one to be three, or any other number than two.

He cannot make a part of a thing to be equal to or greater than the whole of it. He cannot make a triangle with two right angles, nor any figure without bounds, nor a lake without a shore, nor an island without surrounding water. He cannot make any thing to be different from itself, while it remains as it is, nor think of a thing that it is, while it is not.

In close connection with such matters, it may be seen that God cannot do things contrary to His own purposes or choices. If He has chosen to create a race of beings with a rational freedom of the will, He cannot then move and control one of those free beings, with respect to that part of him which is free, as He moves and controls a stone; but He must do it in a manner consistent with the freedom He has chosen to give him. It may further be said that God cannot do things contrary to His own moral perfections and inconsistent with His holiness. He cannot regard wrong as identical with right or as equally desirable. And He cannot be pleased with what is sinful, unlovely and hateful.

Still further it may be added, God cannot

do what is against the substantial and necessary quality or condition of His own being as God. He cannot cease to be God. Whether it is because of what might be called a fixed natural necessity, or by reason of an equally steadfast and invincible moral repugnancy, or by both, or whether on this spot, through the shadows that lie upon it, we can at all discern such distinctions, we must still believe, standing afar off, that He could not so turn His omnipotence to bear upon or destroy itself, or uproot and overwhelm and extinguish His own eternal self-existence and deity.

But these things which have been mentioned as if they might be apparent exceptions or limitations to the omnipotence of God are in truth no limitations, but something far different and opposite. They are not defects in God; they are signs of His perfection. He can never be unreasonable, unlovely or weak. He can never do any thing that shall not be done in reason, righteousness and strength. To this point alone do all these exceptions come. The only things which He cannot do are the things which He would not be a glori-

ous and omnipotent God in doing. It should surely be counted to be by no failure of resources that He is forever and certainly exempt from folly, from weakness and from sin.

Moreover with respect to each of these things of which it has been said, God cannot do them, the ground or occasion why He cannot, is in Himself alone and not in any outward hindrance. As to things unreasonable, for example, that the whole of a thing cannot be made less than each part, these rules of reason, though we cannot think of them except as necessary and absolute, are yet not foreign to the reason of God, but identical with it. They put no constraint upon Him, but they are of Himself.

And if He cannot make right to be one with wrong, or be pleased with the wrong as with the right, or ever do wrong, it is from His own chosen and established holiness alone that He cannot. And the fact that He can never cease to be the God He is, arises from nothing outward or beside Himself; but from the breadth and depth and

strength of that foundation only in Himself upon which He abides eternally the omnipotent God.

Thus as before we see that there is no limitation upon the power of God save what may be found in His own divine completeness. God is limited by nothing but His own perfections. So when we say that God can do all things, we mean all things which are with Him and in themselves reasonable and fit to be done. And when we say that He can do whatever He pleases, we mean whatever is pleasing to Him as a wise and holy God. And what He pleases stands for a pleasure free and wide and guided by nothing save the harmonies and beauties of His own self-balanced and undiscordant being.

Here every thought of limitation may pass from our minds. All our labor must be to enlarge our thoughts towards the actual greatness of the power that dwells with God. We have only to fear, what indeed must certainly befall us, that with all our labor we shall come short of it. Looking in a little upon this storehouse of God's almightiness

we may set down somewhat of its greatness and contents.

God is able to create and has created all that exists besides Himself. The central mystery, the vital tie and bond of the creation, I do not think we shall ever know, and we need not try to unfold it. God is able to uphold and guide and control, absolutely, subject to the laws and regulations only of His own choice and appointment, all that exists. His power reaches to the substance, to the innermost essence and subsistency of matter and spirit. There is no effective opposition to it from any of His creatures, nor any hindrance against it from anything within the creation. The universe has no foothold for any movement or force against God, any more than for one standing on a planet there is a chance to lay hold on anything to stop the rolling of the very planet he stands on. The power of God is everywhere complete. It is not greater with the things that are great, nor less with the things that are small. It is on all things equal and perfect, and with no strain or pressure on itself. It is might to move and

hold at rest; to organize and to dissolve. It is control upon form and life and law. It is strength to do all that is done or that ever has been done, and all that may be done or that ever might be done. It is capacity equal to all that man can ever think of and to all that He who is able to think of all things, can think of. It is energy that has never any end, exhaustion or abatement. It is not measurable in the creation nor likenable to anything within it. It is of one birth and one quality with the divine eternity and the divine omniscience, and is shoreless and bottomless and matchless and solitary, and is of kindred alone with God. The omnipotence of God is thus deep, full and comprehensive; real, veritable, broad and strong, corresponding to the name it bears: and *is* full and complete omnipotence. It reaches to the farthest bounds of thought, and without all bounds beyond.

Now we may consider some of the proofs of this divine omnipotence. Perhaps they should rather be called signs or tokens of it. We get in part visions or glimpses of it which make upon us their own impressions of real-

ity, perhaps varying impressions. They cannot now be much dwelt upon; they can but be pointed at.

Reason, I think, itself declares the omnipotence of God. The intellectual conception of God involves it. I mean that if we set forth at all to look for an Author of the creation, for a Being who is the ground of being, we are hurried shortly and as if by a strong necessity into the regions of infinity, and into the presence of greatness beyond measure.

Somewhat in the same manner our full moral conceptions of God require that He should be almighty. In our persent modes of thought, the perfection and completeness of wisdom and of holiness have need to be joined with an equal power. It is of violence to our highest thought of God, and unnatural and impossible that He should not be almighty. For so of necessity do all these great elements of self-being and infinity, of eternity, might, and moral empire close together and abide one upon another. Once seen, they are known to be inseparable.

I believe too when these things most high

and great concerning God are thought of, there is both a moral and an intellectual desirableness and safety in fastening upon them at their fullest measure. For everything high and great, which can reasonably be discerned concerning God, belongs therefore in realness and certainty with God.

Further, the creation testifies to the almightiness of God. The thought of creation implies of necessity completeness of power, assuredly, within the creation itself. Whatever is created is subject by creation to Him who made it. He who creates it makes it in its substance, in all its powers and parts and principles. He is almighty in its being, in its very self. The power of God within the creation has not ceased in its actual exertion, as if with any single stroke the creation were finished in some past time. Every present energy of every sort within the creation, moving or resisting, is nothing else but the power of God, moving or holding fast upon it. It is by no force of abstract reasoning alone that this truth is in our times impressed upon us. The students of nature are discerning with

startling clearness the marks of intelligence and power in action upon all the matter of all the worlds. It is a single intelligence and a single power in unity of purpose and of method, controlling every mass and penetrating every atom of the material creation. Its movements are calculable and measurable, though they are inconceivable in speed and might. It is known that it seizes and makes to vibrate every particle of matter within the utmost bounds of the visible universe. It is not open to any doubt that there is an intelligent almightiness within the creation reaching as far as the creation reaches. It is the almightiness of God. There is no need to stop for the question whether through outward nature alone this intelligent almightiness would be known to possess the qualities of self-conscious life. Our own rational souls are not altogether parts of what we thus call outward nature. It is not likely to the view of reason that the all-knowing and almighty Maker of all created existence should be lacking Himself in that crowning glory of personal being with which He has endowed all the mul-

titude of mankind who are the work of His own hand. Rather with reason we look upon Him as the one in whose image we are made by Him, and we recognize Him as Father of our spirits, the God of the spirits of all flesh.

The almightiness of God is round about us and within us. A glimpse of what this almightiness is we may see in a single instance. The earth as it swings in its revolution around the sun is held in its path by what we call the attraction of gravitation. It is a power passing all around us and through us, unseen and unfelt; yet it holds the earth to the sun by a force as great as that of wires of steel stretching from the earth to the sun, and set over every inch of the face of the earth as thick as the grasses upon the summer fields; and our earth is but as a grain of sand among the enormous and innumerable orbs that sweep throughout the depths of the creation in speed, in order, and in silence. And gravity is but one among the powers in motion or at rest throughout the creation. Thus does the creation make manifest the omnipotence of God.

We cannot think either that we have this evidence of power with God complete within the actual, present creation only, and commensurable with it, but not of full and absolute omnipotence;—as if God were able to do so much as we see to have been done and not more. It might appear to be a sufficient reply to say that a power complete throughout the whole present existing creation might be adequate for all the practical purposes of human life and thought. In a manner indeed, it might; but in a manner, possibly, not. It is a mysterious power of the human mind by which we compass in thought the bounds of all present outward existence with imaginations of things beyond. All things that exist are not of certainty to our thought all the things that might exist. This reaching of human thought beyond all known present (outward) existence is likely to be, and indeed must be, by some reflection or some shadow, from the being of God Himself the Maker of man. Thus conceiving God, we believe that He both fills and overpasses the worlds He has made. He occupies and transcends His creation. It

is not likely at least, that God has put upon any man powers of vision beyond the bounds of His own being. He has not ordained a creation from any of whose eminences there are prospects wider than Himself. If we discern beyond the range of the existing creation a place or scope for a possible surpassing absolute omnipotence, that is therefore the omnipotence of God.

It has appeared also to many that the very act of creation, which indeed, we but dimly apprehend, must of necessity imply a freedom and range of choice concerning it, stretching around and beyond the particular thing that might be created.

Still further with respect to a boundary of the universe itself. There is none that knows of it. No eye has seen it. No sense the most acute and far running has ever told of it. We only know that the universe has its boundaries —if we know it—by that force of reason which leads to the greater possible thought of God beyond it. The divine eternity alone encompasses it. The divine infinity alone pervades and enwraps it. The universe is only in this

way understood to be small, not by itself, but by the measure of God who is great.

Thus may the creation be as an island whose bounds are indeed too remote to be seen, but upon which one listening in the silence may hear from far off on all its shores the roar of the deep, the beating waves of the unmeasurable greatness of God.

So does the creation reveal the omnipotence of its Maker. The proofs we have cited may be dim in part; but in solid bulk they are clear and strong. The creation is everywhere subjected to its Maker, and obedient to Him. It makes known in all its motions and substances the most stupendous forces from Him now acting upon it, and it has upon whatever is reasonable within it the impress or reflection of that same might without all limit, from whence it came, and upon the bosom of which it is borne.

Again, conspicuously and clearly, the Scriptures declare that God is almighty. These Scriptures are fittingly called the Word of God Himself. They were given to us by men whose walk was near to God, and who had

knowledge of Him. God in His word makes known of Himself, that He has full power over men and over all other beings. He affirms that none upon earth or in heaven can resist Him, or stay His hand. He declares that He does according to all His pleasure; and that there is no God or real power beside Himself. He appeals to His creation in proof of His omnipotence. He takes to Himself all its power and greatness as His own. He affirms that it exists only by His will and from Himself. He calls Himself by name Almighty. And he declares it directly, as in the words of the text, saying to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God."

There is a peculiar interest to be taken in the manner of these Biblical representations, and especially in what is said of the creation, and of God's power appearing in it. When God speaks in the Bible of His creating work as His own, and as obedient to Himself, it is done in what may be called a *free* way. It is as if in His own thought the question of His supremacy throughout the creation had never arisen. And when He speaks with His

creatures He does not argue concerning His power, as a thing of real dispute, but He points to these His works, affirming, or more frequently assuming only, that they are His, and leaving them to make on the mind of the beholder their own impression. There is often also a certain style of assurance and of exultation that may be traced upon these Biblical representations of the power of God throughout His creation:—"Yea, before the day was, I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand." "I will work and who shall let it?" "To whom then will ye liken me and shall I be equal, saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of His might; not one faileth." So do the stars of heaven march like an army at His bidding, none ever leaving his place in the perfect ranks. Or He leads them out as a shepherd that calls to each of his flock by name. They go after Him along the paths of the sky, drawn by the strong persuasion of the voice of God, and not one of

them has ever a mind to stop. So in language still more sublime and suggestive there is set forth the greatness of God before all His works and beyond them all. The whole now visible and existing creation is declared to be with Him but as a garment that He may put on or lay aside. Such is all the generation of the earth and of the heavens in the day wherein they are created. And thus does God confirm and establish in His Word the highest thoughts that reason is able to frame concerning His power and greatness.

With respect to this divine omnipotence, thus in general defined and established, some further remarks may be made touching upon its characteristics and connections. This omnipotence is not sheer unqualified force. It is not mere strength, might naked, grim and bald against which nothing can stand. There is no such bare almightiness. The only almightiness the universe contains is the almightiness of *God,* and that is divine. It is not sheer and stark and headlong. It is exact and fitting, trained, skilful, balanced and obedient. It has before been stated that the power of

God is in precise adjustment and harmony with His reason and His holiness. This is not that reason and holiness keep perpetual watch upon it, as upon a sleeping lion, as if in itself it were a thing but dull and alien in its quality from those high perfections. It is their native and equal partner and ally. And it is in full accord with all goodness and intelligence by its own quality, because it is divine. The almightiness of God is not as a weaver's beam in the hand of a giant. It is an instrument, mighty, delicate and facile. It is as light as a thought of God. It can trace the veins of a microscopic cell. It can mix the purple and gold of sunset. It can create a soul, rational and incorruptible. It is not indeed a mere instrument at all. The almightiness of God is His perfect ableness to do all that lies within the range of intelligence and goodness. It has no more to do with the overcoming of resistance, as by any opposing will, or from any weight, as of dead matter, than it has with the seeking out of arrangements and adaptations, or the keeping of proprieties and harmonious beauties. The foundations of

omnipotence itself may lie as truly upon rightness and moral balance—upon exact and perfect aptitude and insight, as upon energy of will. The being of the Most High is in all respects complete, and the completeness of it is full in every part. There is no putting forth of bare power, shorn of all its intelligence and devoid of all its moral proprieties and significances, as if a stone were to rush meaningless into space. When we look upon the power of God in nature, it is in such order that it seems to be not might, but law. When we feel it in our own souls it is with such light, such majesty and grace, that it never appears to us as force upon us, but as the presence of reason, the commanding awe and attraction of holiness and truth. Thus only is it to be beheld and thought of, with these its robes of wisdom and comeliness upon it.

Omnipotence is the energy with God of what is orderly, delicate, tasteful and right. It is great and gentle, shining, steadfast and strong; it is light and quick, supple and sensitive, tender and majestic and awful, it is disciplined, graceful, tuneful, and beauteous,

pure, just, reasonable, considerate, divine. And thus in the Bible God appeals to His works of power, not commonly as displaying might alone, but reason and purpose with it. "The heavens declare the glory of God"—the blended glory of intelligence, beneficence and power. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." By His Spirit hath He garnished—made beauteous and fair—the heavens. "He covereth Himself with light as with a garment. He stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them abroad as a tent to dwell in." Thus God has not cast abroad these vast and innumerable orbs as the storehouses of power, or as the rolling balls of some gigantic game. He has rather uttered them as words of intelligence, speaking of Himself. He makes the heaven, not a great weapon of might, brandished over us, but as a curtain, the drapery of a tent, garnished, resplendent and beauteous, for the dwelling-place of God. The almightiness of God is then His power and skill to spread these heavens, the awful and befitting residence and temple of His own perfections, and

of Himself. It is His full ability to make all His works in creation, and also in government, the perfect expression of His infinite being and glory. It is the Most High Himself in the pervading presence, the unhindered and irresistible prevalence of all His reason and grace throughout the universe He has made.

We may perceive also that this constant alliance of the wisdom and goodness of God with His omnipotence must perforce cause all our thoughts of that omnipotence to be quickening and cleansing in their moral effects upon our souls. This is the fitting end and result of all our meditations concerning God. This is the purpose, wherever in the Bible the power of God is set before us, and even where no special mention may be made of moral accompaniments and obligations. For the revealing Spirit has presumed somewhat on the use by man of these inborn and reasonable instincts that ally omnipotence with its kindred attributes of completeness in wisdom and holiness. Thus in the book of Job, though greatness in power alone is most spoken of, yet it brings forth at last moral impressions, as by the

presence of the over-awing and commanding righteousness of God. So did he who thus beheld the great God abhor himself and repent. So should all our discernments of the greatness of God ever lead us to penitence and submission, to trust and love and service. And behold, He is not far from every one of us.

By these thoughts we are taught our dependence upon God. It is needful to trust in God. It is safe and wholesome and strengthening. Even as to bodily life it would be better for us if we considered more that the goodness and wisdom and almightiness of God are always abiding and acting within us. We are to keep His laws; we are to do diligently our part. We are to welcome and trust His power within us, and we are to submit with grateful hearts to His clearer wisdom. And we shall be the more strong in soul and body.

We must be most grateful for the revelation God has made of Himself through His Son, our Lord and our human brother. He has thus strengthened our thoughts concerning His own personal life, His care for us, and

His personal nearness to us. He has made provision by the display of His holiness and His grace for the cleansing of our souls from the stain of sin, and has set before us a quickened hope of an endless personal life with Him.

Finally, we may find it to be certain that the wisdom and holiness of God will be everywhere and forever in control throughout all the worlds. The omnipotence of God is forever His own. It holds man in all his generations and multitudes as a drop in the bucket. It takes up the isles and the continents as a very little thing. It pervades, upholds and controls His creation in all its elements and powers. It casts the light of His intelligence, clear and piercing, upon every eye of reason that may open to behold it. It makes the splendors and sanctities of His holiness to blaze upon all that is moral in the universe that He has ordained. It will endure and act when the pillars of these heavens, firm against all but its own reproof, shall tremble and fall. It will uphold the arches of each new enlarging or succeeding

creation, whose widening foundations itself will lay. It will survive and abide, undiminished, complete and supreme, with nothing like it in might or glory in being with it. It will endure throughout the changes of time and the progression of eternity, whose determined order alike it brings to pass; and it will hold high over every wave of futile rebellion or of change, the throne itself of God, and will abide the everlasting companion of Him that sits upon it. And in the discernment of its ordered beneficence and glory it will make to awake throughout all the borders of His dominions the song, full as the voice of many waters, and whose strains will never die:—

"ALLELUIA, FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH."

VII

THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

VII

THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Isaiah 42: 1-4. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.

THESE verses in Isaiah are a prophecy concerning the authority and government of Jesus Christ in the world. They are going on now toward fulfilment. I purpose to speak of the nature and extent of this authority, and of its hold on us.

We should consider at the outset, that this is a matter of fact with which we are to deal. It is a thing of real occurrence and existence, whatever else it may be. This sense of reality may sometimes slip out of our minds when it should not. You are busied through six

days of the week, as you know, with real things. At least they are things that you think of as real. The word "business" which is applied to your common occupations, has itself a kind of sound of reality. Business is something solid. It is not a thing fanciful or imaginary, or sentimental or theoretical. It is a plain bare thing. "Business is business." The natural objects of common business are such as can be taken hold of and known. Money can be seen—if you can get it. Crops and farm stock, houses and lands, horses and carriages, food and clothing, leather and hardware and dry goods,—all products of manufacture and all articles of merchandise, you can look at and handle and use. Possibly some of you may think when you come to matters of religion that you strike a different line of things. You may think that you come to matters that do not have much substance in them. You know that it is important for you to prosper in your work or business for Friday or Saturday or Monday; but you may not be so clear that prospering in the business of Sunday would be of any great account to you.

But you would make a mistake if you should have such thoughts. I admit that there is a difference between common, week-day things, and the things proper to the Sabbath day. But it is not a difference as to reality and solidness; or if it is, the advantage in that respect is not with the common week-day things. There is a difference between beef and patriotism; but it is not better to have a good dinner than to have a good country. A man would make a mistake who should sell his birthright in a good country for a mess of pottage. The most precious things of man's life are not always, nor mostly, material things. The things of religion, though they are not directly material things, are very real things. Things are real when they have actual existence and place in the world. Things are important when they control or affect, or have influence upon many and great concerns.

Now we will take one specimen of the things that come before us on the Sabbath days and see how it is as to reality and importance. We will take the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as it actually appears and exists in the

world, and see what sort of a thing it is. We will not make up anything about it. We will take it and look at it as we find it. And I will try as to my part, to speak fairly, and not otherwise.

We can see then, to begin with, that there are very great numbers of people in the world, certainly, who are called by the Christian name. Christian nations in name occupy Europe, North and South America, large portions of Australia and the neighboring islands, and parts of Asia and Africa. These are great and commanding portions of the globe. The control of these nations extends far beyond their actual occupancy; and while Christians in name are still a minority of the population of the earth, yet as to power and voice in the world's affairs, they are a vast majority. In all matters of knowledge and civilization this leadership of the Christian nations is most decisive.

You may say that some of these nations are not Christian in much except the name, and that in all these nominally Christian lands there are great numbers of people who do

not personally have much thought concerning Christ; and it may be true. But yet the force of this name has stamped itself in some way upon these lands. They all date their years from His birth. The law from Him has shaped largely the institutions and social state of all these nations. They are widely different in many things from nations not at all Christian, nations wholly Mohammedan or pagan.

The force of this contrast is not I think in reality weakened by reflection upon the splendid Power that is now newly arising upon the Eastern shores of the Pacific. As Christian believers we have no interest in making scanty or faint the light from God that shines in every land. And the people of Japan have at least, under all the conditions, been singularly hospitable to the rays of Christian light that have only begun in recent years to fall upon them.

Looking again on the Christian lands, we find it an impressive matter that when the Christian Sabbath day comes, multitudes of people in all these lands leave off their common work or common pleasure and assemble to-

gether to think of Christian things and to offer praise and worship to God and to Christ. We find thousands and hundreds of thousands of places of Christian worship. They are built and maintained with cost, and often with heavy sacrifice. Multitudes of persons are actively interested in spreading the knowledge of Christ and His work and law throughout the world. The Christian Scriptures are circulated and read out of measure beyond any other writings or books. The Bible is printed in every written language of the earth. Many languages have been put into writing for the first time in order that the Bible might be printed and read in them. Great numbers of men are distinctly enrolled in Christian churches. There are in the United States alone, and in Protestant denominations alone, fifteen (I suppose more than fifteen) millions of church members.

Here again one might say that very many of these church members do not seem to be very thoroughly Christian, except in their profession, and it may be true. But I say also in reply, that the actual effect of the work

and life of Christ throughout these churches, and much beyond them, is immense and profound.

After every allowance and abatement, there are vast multitudes of men in the world who have a most singular and commanding respect for this person, Jesus Christ. They call Him their Lord. They honor His name above every other name. They desire to do Him service. They try to copy in themselves His character and spirit. They trust Him in all the greatest things of life. They commit their souls to His keeping in life and in death.

These things are peculiar. They are solitary and unique, whatever else they are. No other man ever had any such influence over men, or anything like it. There have been, and are, many popular men, great men and powerful men; but not in this measure or kind. There is no one else that so many people have such a care for.

We know how people are sometimes moved to see great men. But if it could be announced by any one authorized to do so, that at a certain time not far distant, Jesus Christ would

come to this earth and show Himself to His friends, and if this were thought to be true, it would make a stir among men such as all the world never saw. This may not be quite a fair supposition in the way of comparison, since such an event as the return again to the earth of a man who had once lived upon it, and had gone from it, would be in any case a thing most strange and moving.

But leaving that, I say farther that even as things now are, the expectation entertained by great numbers of men, that at their own natural death they will themselves pass into the personal presence of Jesus Christ, has now an actual effect upon them that is most singular, and most impressive, when it is considered. It is an effect far more powerful than any such expectation has had or ever could have upon any like number of persons with respect to meeting again, beyond this life, with any other single person that ever lived. As to other meetings beyond the earth, one man may think of some of his own particular friends, and another man of his friends; but no great numbers of men have any deep interest and

concern as to meeting any one and the same person, except in the case of these multitudes who look forward with awe and hope to their meeting with Jesus Christ, who is to them Lord, and Keeper and Judge of their souls.

None of the greatest men ever cast on numbers of other men any such spell as this, reaching through this life, and over upon a life anticipated beyond the present. I should care little about seeing Julius Cæsar, though as to mind and force of will he was one of the very greatest of men. I would as soon see Brutus. I should care more to see Moses, or David, or Paul, or Martin Luther, or John Milton. But neither I nor you, nor any considerable number of other men, have such thoughts or concerns, such expectations and hopes resting upon any other man as these multitudes have with regard to Jesus Christ their Lord. Not even the founders of other religions, as Mohammed or Confucius, have any such present and continuous, vital, personal hold on their followers.

I am speaking of these things as facts only, without saying anything yet as to whether

there is any due ground for these feelings or not. These feelings exist. It is a very striking fact that they do.

You may see too, that this personal influence of Jesus Christ has continued for a very long time. It has held on through nineteen centuries and on the whole it has increased, and gained force through all that space. The authority and personal weight of Jesus Christ among men is greater today than it ever was in any of the former ages. Looking widely over the earth there can be no question of it, —and there is nothing else like it.

It is true indeed that the memories of other men are cherished, and that their influence is felt long after they are gone from the world; and sometimes more and more as time goes on. Lincoln and Washington are not forgotten, and their work is not growing small. The influence of the writings and sayings of Socrates and Plato is still great, perhaps as great as ever. The effect of the life of Julius Cæsar has not ceased altogether to be felt. But this is a very different matter. No great amount of personal devotion now exists toward

any of these men. No great care is now shown by any great number of men to make their own lives pleasing to these men that are gone. There is no great sense—nor scarcely any sense at all—of constraining authority over life proceeding from any of these men. I do not care much whether Julius Cæsar approves of anything that I do or not. I do not care at all. I do not think that any one of you has a grain of any such care,—nor any one else in the whole world. The personal authority of Julius Cæsar over human life has waned and gone out utterly. I am not disturbed by knowing that my opinions and practice in some matters of morals differ from those of Plato. And I do not look even to Lincoln or Washington for any decisive judgment upon what my life and character have been, or ought to be. I do not pray to them, nor offer them thanks. None of you do. No man does. But multitudes of men do look to Jesus Christ with reverence and trust, with gratitude and hope and love as the Guide and Lord of their lives. Great numbers of men in former times have given up life itself rather than to cast

aside or deny their trust in Him. Some have given up their lives in this way but lately. I think there are many who would do the same, if they had to make the choice. And there are uncounted numbers of those to whom their trust in Him has been their chief support in times of trouble, and their only dependence in the hour of death.

Jesus Christ has thus a following in the world such as no other man has, or ever did have. And though He died and was buried centuries ago, yet He has more actual power here on earth than any other man has, or ever did have.

Some men may think slightingly of the power of Christ because it is not put forth through the ordinary visible forms of human government. He did not get this control over men by outward force. He does not now maintain any visible organized, outward, forcible authority or government in the world. Nevertheless He has this great authority and weight. Was it not said of Him by the prophet, that He should not strive, nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the street? Did not

Daniel speak of His kingdom as of a great stone, filling the earth, that no man's hands had ever hewed out? Did not He Himself say that His kingdom was not of this world in any such way that His servants should fight for Him? But He has the kingdom.

You may ask if the fact that great numbers have had these feelings toward Jesus Christ proves of itself that such feelings are well grounded. No, it does not prove it. But this influence, this power, long-continuing, spreading, steadfast, is an impressive thing, and it is natural enough to believe that it springs somewhere out of an eternal source. But I am now not much busied with proving anything. I am only making statement of some facts. They are facts that deserve in themselves to be thought of.

But if you look further you will see that this great authority and influence of Jesus Christ is very remarkable as to its nature and moral quality. His control over men is not only singularly strong, but it is also singularly just and good.

I am still keeping to my purpose of dealing

only with plain facts. I am not going to enter into any argument to prove that what I say here is true. If it does not seem to be true, it need not be believed. But I think it is plain on the face of things that the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ bears against what is evil and sustains what is good. It presses men everywhere toward the highest and best things. Evil enough, indeed, is to be found in Christian lands, and with Christian men; but real Christian feelings will not be found helping on toward the evil. I think you will see that the more thoroughly men are Christian, the more strongly they are turned from evil. At least you will see that Christians themselves everywhere assert and maintain that this is true. They would all say that while they are conscious of much evil in themselves, they are yet most sure that the authority of Jesus Christ upon them, so far as they feel it and yield to it, is never toward evil, but always toward all good. It is a fact that all say this thing. It is a most extraordinary fact. If what they say is true, it goes far to show that the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world is the

same thing with the power of God. It is a power opposing with high commands every shape of wickedness, and impelling with mighty motives toward whatever is holy and gracious,—it looks like the power of God on earth.

I am not now much taken up with proving anything concerning the truth of the Christian religion, or concerning the central reality and rightfulness of the authority of Jesus Christ. We are only looking at these lines of facts, to see a little what they mean, and what attention they deserve from us. Yet along with what has come to our thoughts already, it is plain, I think, that there has been a very remarkable fulfilment of the ancient prophecies concerning the coming of one great Person whose glory and grace should shine over all the earth and abide upon it; one of the increase of whose government and peace there should be no end; one who should reprove with equity and patience, and with prevailing might, for the meek of the earth; one who should not fail nor be discouraged until He should set judgment in all the earth, and for

whose law the isles should wait. It is going on before your sight. His kingdom spreads. His law prevails. Men submit themselves in love and thankfulness to Him. The whole great prediction is beginning to come to pass. It has in fact come illustriously to pass already. The earth is being warmed by these gracious influences from the life and reign of the Lord Jesus among men. The warmth comes slowly, like the slow-coming heat of the sun in spring. The cold of the earth stands against it, like drifts of snow and great sheets of northern ice. But day by day the sun circles higher in the sky; and day after day — century beyond century — the light, the warmth, the righteousness, the love prevail.

We can now see to what point we have come. This person Jesus Christ has been set forth among men in a position singular, solitary and commanding. Through many ages and on many lands He has taken to Himself in fact a power the like of which in range and scope is unknown on earth. It puts its hand on every aim and interest of human life. In its

claims it reaches to every present duty and controls every immortal hope.

In some practical reflections that may be made upon these facts, this may well stand first; the Christian religion is a thing great. It is large, if there is anything that is large. No human concern is wider in its sweep, or more important in its issues. It follows too that the Christian religion is a thing calling for direct and active attention. It runs close to life. It is vital in its own nature. Its very motive and substance lie in its purpose to direct all life and to shape all character. This mighty and spreading authority upon which we have looked is an authority over the lives of men. It calls for grateful recognition and obedience from every man. It is something to be dealt with, not to be lightly let alone. It is a matter to be at the least considered. Some action should be taken on it—whatever is done. Surely it should not be put off with delays. Business methods require that we take in hand the things that are at hand to be done. This is at hand. It is within the close range of practical life. You are not unmindful of

your soul, your self, your endless standing with God? All these things the authority of Jesus Christ bears on. So at least, the claim is made. This claim, this authority, in its force and nature, is a thing to be weighed and pronounced upon with care and promptness.

It follows also, I think, from what we have seen, that we may commit our souls to the guidance and keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ with a reasonable confidence and certainty of everlasting life and safety. His power has the manner and bearing of steadfast, reasonable, rightful, unending continuance. The things which we see with Him are not altogether temporal; they are also eternal.

I know the penetrating force of the doubts that may often afflict our minds concerning the endurance of the life of man, and concerning the verity and realness of the things that are beyond, as we believe, the present, visible, transitory frame of nature. But I know also that the hopes of man lie alone along this line of the Christian faith. Nothing else appears in like manner to lay hold on an eternal state. Here is the one endless prospect or hope for

human life. I behold the mighty living witness that God hath given to us eternal life and that that life is in His Son. I hear the lofty command to fight the fight of *faith,* and to lay hold upon eternal life. It is wise to hope. It is safe to believe.

I press upon you therefore, all these considerations drawn from the continuing power and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, visible among men. It is clear certainly, that there is a great cause going on in the world. It is great as to what has been done, and as to what is promised. It is asserted and believed by many, that the only Son of God has been once on the earth, a man among men, and that He has set up here in the world a continuing authority most powerful and gracious. It is claimed and believed by many that He is willing and able to forgive the sins of penitent, humble and trustful men, and to deliver them from sin. It is promised, and it is hoped and expected by many, that He will carry every loving and trusting man beyond all the darkness of the earth into the security and blessing of a holy and immortal life.

What are your thoughts, what are your cares, what are your wishes, what are your hopes, what are your purposes and expectations concerning Him, and concerning yourself?

VIII

THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD

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Acts 17:31. Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained.

"THAT Man" here spoken of is the Lord Jesus, who is elsewhere repeatedly referred to as the Judge of men. In the tenth chapter of the book of the Acts, it is said that He is "ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." But it is also often directly declared in the Bible that God is Himself the final Judge. Thus in Romans 14:12, it is written, "So every one of us shall give account of himself to God." In Hebrews 12:23, there is ascribed directly to God the title, "The Judge of all." The same phrases or forms of words concerning the office of judgment are made use of with respect both to Christ and to God. Thus it is said in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of

Christ." And in Romans 14: 10 (R. V.), "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God." In 2 Timothy 4: 1, the names of God and Christ are joined in connection with this act of judgment, and the Apostle says, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead."

It is evident from these and other similar passages, that the work of judgment, in whatever manner performed by the Lord Jesus Christ, is a divine work, and is wrought by Christ by virtue of His divine office and relationship as the Representative of God and as God. It is fitting that the same being who was on earth as the Redeemer of men, should appear also as Judge. But these thoughts, so far as concerns any distinctions in the divine being need not now be kept in mind. It is a judgment of God that is foretold in the text.

It is a serious theme which is thus brought before us. But the most high and refreshing things of life are always serious. This subject—the righteous judgment of God on human life, is in its nature lofty, animating and

hopeful. And may the Most High God Himself enlighten our souls as we turn our thoughts upon it.

I shall speak first of the general nature and significance of the judgment of God on men, second, of the proofs or signs of the coming judgment of God, third, of the fitness of God to be the Judge of men, and fourth of the results of the judgment of God upon the standing and repute and destiny of men.

First, the general significance of the fact of an appointed judgment of God is to make the world of men a responsible and regulated world. A world that is to be judged is not a loose place of life. It is not a world where men may go this way and that way, and no matter where, and without its making in the end any difference. It is not a place of careless running toward no end. It is not as if men were let out upon the earth as birds into the air, to go where they would. There is an end to it. There is a reckoning for it. Men are not left here to go always loose. They are to be brought together. There is to be a result of life, on before us. It is as if the

birds were let out, not to fly hither and thither at random, but to fly far away to some distant point, where they would all be looked for. Men are to be looked for at the end of life. They will come together, all of them, to a place of account.

This signifies that there is a proper purpose and a law for each human life. Each life will come somewhere to a reckoning as to how it has gone. There is a *trial* to be made at some time concerning it.

A strong meaning lies in this great fact of judgment, even when we look upon it only in this wide way. The accountability of life surrounds us on every side. We are in a world that God will judge in righteousness. He will see how all things in it square with righteousness, or how they do not. He has a mind to judge it. He has set a day to do it. We shall all ourselves appear before the judgment seat of God. We are in no place for heedless living. Moral capacities have been given us, opportunities are set before us; and we shall make a report concerning them.

We come, second, to the signs or proofs

of a judgment by God. The great proof of a coming judgment is the clear declaration of the Bible. We believe there is to be a judgment because we believe the Bible which foretells it.

All the proofs of every sort on which the Bible rests are proofs of the judgment. Beneath all belief in the Bible, and along with all its proofs, rest and go the belief and evidence concerning the being of God. If there is a God He is likely to have revealed Himself to men. All proofs of revelation, historical or providential, imply a concern of God for man. So as to the judgment; if there is a God, He is likely to be the Judge of men. The continuing care of God for the deeds and destinies of men implies it. Biblical truth is confirmed in history, which shows the effect of truth on those receiving it. The truth respecting a judgment on men is confirmed by historical beginnings—they might be called—of judgment. There is a distinguishing already and an assorting out, swift or slow, of the evil from among the good in human life, and a difference set between them. Biblical truth passes out in

part for proof upon the moral sensibilities and expectations of men; and the signs of judgment are in part among the moral instincts and anticipations of the soul. The hold of duty on us is a hold of judgment. The sense of shame in sin, and the sense of fear for sin, are shadows before of the coming judgment.

The assertions of the Bible concerning a coming judgment are not bare unsupported assertions. They are in concurrence with the highest thoughts and the most sacred hopes of man. The great belief in God stands distinctive and eminent concerning judgment. The Bible declares, and the mind of man agrees to the declaration, that a Being exists, of capacities in intelligence and power, and of qualities in moral nature and balance, which fit Him to be the Judge of men, and which make it certain that He will bring mankind into judgment. There is a moral Governor of the universe of men, wise, powerful, and just. In the exercise of these perfections He does govern men. This is the central fact of a moral sort within the creation. In a world occupied and governed by such a God, account

must be taken of the deeds and deserts of men. The throne of God is of strong necessity a throne of judgment.

I have said that this is the central and distinguishing fact of the creation. It is also the most glorious distinction the creation could bear. A Power of wisdom and righteousness prevails within it, and will finally bring its inhabitants to judgment.

Much of the present darkness of the earth arises from some lack of present manifested judgment in it. Judgment is held back, and put off, and partly obscured. This is done for the growth of faith, and for the trial and forming of life. But it makes the present time often dark. How uneasy you are often yourselves because justice is not done, and because there is not enough of judgment in the world! One man gathers in good that does not belong to him; another fails to gain that which is his right. Discredit falls where it is not deserved; praise is missed by those that earn it. How disturbed the sight or the feeling of these things often makes you! How men all about you are tossed by these discomforts, because

there is not enough of present judgment on men! How tyrannies still prevail in lands too dark and lands too wide, while the innocent and the poor have no helper. How men have prayed for justice on the oppressor!

This unrest of the earth as it is, is among the signs of the coming judgment. It might almost be said that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now in desire for a coming judgment. How dark the earth would be with no hope of judgment, and with all present thoughts of judgment ended! How could men live together forever in a world in which it should never be known whether any weight of wisdom and power lay on the side of things good? What heavings and tossings and swingings backward and forward there would be in such a human society, without order or hope! What upsetment and darkness there would be, and endless unrest in every soul! Would you like yourself to live in such a world? Would you like to be, if you could, where there was no God, no force of justice, no judgment? Would you enjoy such unrests of thought, such unsettlements of prin-

ciple, such ungovernments of all desires, with your fellow-men, and with yourself? Would you like to make your home in such a land of looseness and eternal disorder, beyond all range of the governing righteousness of God? —Possibly sometimes you might. I know how in hours of weakness we may be ready to put away our highest thoughts and to let go at once the restraints and hopes of holiness and eternal justice. But the highest thoughts of men are most safe, most wholesome, most true. It is from off the summits of life that you see most clearly the things around you or before you. In stronger and better hours, and on all the higher lands of life, you will see the light from the throne of judgment, great and white, and you will rejoice that a just God bears rule over man.

These things are strong in the hearts of men, —the binding force of duty, the proper and certain control of justice on human life. They are fixed within us. They cannot be removed. We cannot think—we can scarcely think, when the better lights of moral reason fall upon us —that we shall not be judged. As moral

beings, rational, hopeful and immortal, our minds are set toward the judgment day, and they cannot be taken from it. These are the signs and proofs of coming judgment in the word of God, and in the heart of man.

Now we have reached, third, the fitness of God to be the Judge of men. The judgment of God on men will be a good quality of judgment. This is indeed the very substance of our thought of God as the Governor of men. He is a Being competent to the work, and qualified for it. The fitness of God to judge men appears at once in all the great particulars of judgment.

(1) He has full knowledge of us, and of whatever has to do with our life and character. He knows our original endowments, our strength or weakness of nature, whether of mind or body. He is acquainted with our place in life, our training, the circumstances of every sort that are about us, all influences of every kind bearing upon us for good or evil. He understands what our opportunities have been, what hindrances have been in our way, what purposes we have had, and what efforts

we have made, whether they have succeeded or not. He knows all our thoughts "afar off," and in minute and unfailing exactness. Nothing that has ever concerned us or that has had any bearing on the moral results of our lives is hidden from Him, or is in any way obscure with Him. And He has the same knowledge concerning every human being. All the materials of judgment are in His possession.

This is very unlike what is apt to be found with judges and juries in men's courts of justice. Here the crimes of men are often hard to be uncovered. The men that commit them will not tell of them, or they will tell falsely. No one else may have seen them; or no one that will tell the truth. Circumstances may be deceptive or confusing. Skilful lawyers may try to make them more so. Truth comes often only slowly to light, if at all. It is hard many times to convict the guilty, or to clear the innocent. What a change it would make, while one of these slow processes of human justice was going forward, or while perhaps it was being twisted backward—if there might pass through the court

room, open to the eyes of judge and jury, one flash of the omniscience of God!

Besides, man-made laws do not deal much with the desires and inward thoughts of men, and the courts of men do not even try usually to find out what men think or wish, or what they really are in themselves, beneath what they may say or do. They are concerned mostly with outward doings. These are but shallow judgments. Trial before God will be different. God is fitted, in clear, illuminating knowledge, to be the Judge of men.

(2) The *power* of God fits Him also for this work of judgment. He can bring the witnesses together, if they are wanted, and all the criminals. He will not be moved by fears or apprehensions when any great man or any popular man, or any unpopular man, may stand before Him,—or any crowds of men. He will not fail of power to cause every man to be fully judged, and to carry out whatever may be the awards of His judgment concerning any. A great part of the uneasy longing for justice and judgment among men that I have spoken of, has been due to the frequent

joining of power with wickedness, so that it has gone hard with righteous men that were not strong. That uneasiness will cease at the judgment seat of God.

We find a great habit among men, when they practice or cherish any evil thing, of entrenching themselves behind some pride of strength, by possession or place or name or power. They are not concerned as to what is exactly right. They are not even much concerned if in some things they should stand opposed to the justice of God. This too will pass away at the judgment day. The almightiness of the Governor of men is much spoken of in the Bible. It is not frequently enough in our thoughts. It will come, on that day, into all the thoughts of men. God is able to judge men. He has the power that fits Him to do it.

(3) God is also just. This is another great particular of fitness for the work of judgment. It is the most high and clear of all. God is a wholly fair and impartial and righteous judge of men. The statements of the Bible here are most strong. God can "do no in-

iquity." "His ways are just and true." "The works of His hands are verity and judgment." "Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne." His dominion and empire rest in righteousness and justice. He is in one breath, "the living and true God."

This is the glory and crown of the Governor of men. This His diadem of righteousness will shine on Him on the great judgment day; and He will then appoint to every man the last awards of life wholly as is most just and right and good. There have been many august judges presiding over human courts whose decisions have shocked and confused the minds of men, and tormented the earth. There have been also many, and a growing number and proportion, happily, in these later times, who have judged in equity. No fairer sight is seen than the administration of justice at the hands of a capable and just man, who can and will unravel the webs of wickedness and set the lines of truth in light.

It is told of Sir Matthew Hale, that he once went, clad as a miller, and unrecognized, into a court where some cause of which he had heard

was to be tried, and he managed (as things then were) to get a place on the jury; there he observed the bribing of the jury and the judge, and watched the falsifications and the perversions of justice that went on, until at a critical stage of the trial he declared himself the Lord Chief Justice of England, and bade the astonished and confounded judge to come down from his place, while he went up upon the bench, and himself tried the case again. It is a satisfying story to the heart of man, and it befits a shining name. But even among such men there is none who is always and wholly wise and just and fair. But the justice of God is steady and even, firm and sure and perfect.

Thus God is fitted to be the Judge of men. He has knowledge, power and righteousness answerable to the office and the occasion. The quality of judgment as He gives it, will be perfect.

This brings us, fourth, to the results of the judgment of God on men. We should not think of the judgment altogether as a single day, once to come and then to pass by. It is

rather a stage of life upon which we shall enter and in which we shall continue always after. That which marks it most distinctly is our coming more manifestly into the presence of God, and standing more openly before Him. The judgment day is the manifestation of God to man, and the manifestation of man before God. It is the bringing of man to know that he is seen of God. And it is also the causing of man to be seen by his fellow-men, and by all other beings in the creation, in the light from God that falls then upon him, and to whatever degree it shall please God to appoint that any man should be so known of others.

At some time, somewhere beyond the earth, and connected, no doubt, with great changes in the natural being and outward surroundings of human life, such an appearance of man before the judgment seat of God will take place. There will be a peculiar "day" at the first opening of that stage of light, that will be the time of the first full disclosures of character—or the beginnings of disclosures—and the time of the first full sense of the judgment from God. In that manner it is "the day of

judgment," clear and memorable, whenever it is. But disclosure and judgment will not end when they begin; they will go on forever. We may have thus our best view of the results of judgment by thinking of men, by thinking of ourselves, as set to abide forever in the clear presence of God. We are in His presence now; but we scarcely know it. We shall know and feel it then—forever.

First of all, there must take place on the judgment day a mighty change of thought and feeling with respect to the place and weight of God Himself within His own creation. With those that have not minded much in this world concerning God, the revelation must be swift and heavy. The standards of life with such men, in the present time, are fashioned and set too far in their own selfish and vain imaginations, and in the fancies of other men like themselves; they have thought of little else. But, behold, with the dawning judgment day, the brightening splendors of the life of God! Behold the far-overmatching and unremovable worth and glory of the Maker and King of men! behold, pure and

full above the midday sun, His discernment, His righteousness and grace illuminating the wide horizon, and penetrating to the center of every soul!

Whatever else may be, there must come then to pass in the minds of many men a sudden and mighty shifting in all the standards of character, and in all the weights and measures of personal reputation and worth. And when these standards and weights of judgment are thus passed over on the side with God, they will remain there steadily forever. Never afterward will there be any thought or misgiving in the mind or heart of any man, that justice, truth, love and goodness are not properly and certainly in authority and supremacy in all the world. Never afterward will anything be thought well of that is in any wise contrary to the truth and goodness that are seen in God. There will be no reputation and no character, and no thought of any, in any unlikeness to God. The weight and commanding glory of the righteousness of God will never afterwards pass away from before the minds of men. This visible and clear

establishment forever of the controlling standards of life as in the righteousness and goodness of God, and the settlement of them thus fully in the minds of men, will be, I think, the chief results of the judgment day.

The retributions of the coming endless life are doubtless chiefly caused by the adjustments that men will make in their own thoughts respecting their fellow-men and respecting themselves in the light of these standards of life that are seen to be with God. Men will be divided—they would divide themselves if they were not divided—by the distinctions between righteousness and the love of sin, which are the distinctions between likeness to God and unlikeness to Him. The division will be exact and correct, because the truth will be exactly known. Beyond the judgment pretences and hypocrisies will have no more use. Character will appear as it is, and reputation and honor will go fittingly with it,—and so will shame. In all that state, after the judgment day, wicked men will receive no more respect than belongs with wickedness. In that state, too, forever, all just and good

men will be seen in the honor that is appropriate to them. Many of those unknown or obscure on earth will be exalted. Numbers of men and women will go up from humble homes and from lowly and patient occupations, to sit on high at the right hand of God.

The Lord Himself, when He was on earth, and before the time of the great judgment day, often set back the proud and set forward the lowly. He said of the poor widow who cast into the treasury the two mites that were all her living, "Behold she has done more than all the rest;" and her memorial, without her name, has filled the world. The names in goodly number, of kindred love and faith and kindred deeds, are written with God, and they will have their endless remembrance and glory, beyond the judgment day. It was in the foresight of that great day of everlasting knowledge that the Lord declared that many of the first should be last, and many of the last should be first. But, first or last, every appointment of that illustrious day, touching the reputation or the destiny of man, will be ordered in the controlling righteousness of God, and will

command the reasonable approval and concurrence of every human soul.

Thus by fitting and glorious necessity, and to solemn, lofty and endless purpose, we shall all appear before the judgment seat of God. It is time that you should make wise and holy settlements of character in preparation for the judgment day. The view to be taken of this great event, is serious and impressive, but it is not dark. All that is wholesome for you in action and character in the present time, all that can make you cheerful and balanced and lovely and strong in life, will be approved in the judgment day. Nothing will be condemned under the judgment light but the things you should never wish to choose. Make haste to gather within yourself the gold that will bear the trial—the goodness that you would be willing yourself to keep. Cast out the deeds and thoughts of darkness. Cast out whatever you would not yourself wish to see within yourself when that day begins.

I have set the great judgment day a little, dimly, before you. Consider it. Awake and look upon it. Do not let its breaking light

surprise you when it comes. Walk in the light that now shines about you, that the everlasting judgment morning may not shortly steal as a thief upon you. You have heard of the coming judgment. You have seen it, a little, afar off. But listen within yourself. Lift up your eyes and behold. You are *now* in the presence of God. You are known of God. Have knowledge yourself now of God. Know yourself as you are known by Him. Transform yourself today into that frame of life and heart and being which you are ready to bear and keep before this judgment seat of God. Pray that there may be created quickly within you a clean heart, and that a right spirit may be renewed and upheld within you.

IX

EASILY BESETTING SINS

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Hebrews 12:1. Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us.

In the Revised Version, the marginal rendering is, "the sin which doth closely cling to us." Under whichever form of words, the meaning is that we must be careful to free ourselves from the sins by which we are easily entangled, or those into which we are most readily led.

One main purpose of our coming together in these Sabbath assemblies is to learn how we may be delivered from our sins. In so far as this goes, the business of the preacher is, not to gratify the tastes of those to whom he speaks, but to help them if he can, in this getting free from sin. It is natural that a minister should wish to speak in such a way as to please his hearers, and I suppose it is in a manner suitable. But it is more important that he should speak in a way to do them good.

Having this in mind, some one has said that it is better that a congregation should go away, not saying — if they might say it — "How beautifully the preacher spoke today,"—but saying, or thinking, "What care we must take concerning our hearts and our lives, that we may keep the law of God." It is for such profiting in our souls that we are here in the house of God.

As to the casting off of our sins, it is plain that it is the worst sins that we should be the most concerned about. It is those that bring us most into danger that we should try most to escape from. If we should let our worst sins alone, it might be but a small matter that we had gotten rid of a number of others. If you were alone in a forest, and were to be attacked at the same time by a mosquito and by a wild-cat, it would be no great matter to you that you were unable to kill the mosquito, if you were straightway after to be torn in pieces by the wild-cat. The worst foe in such a case is the one to be first looked after.

The worst sins for us may not always be those that are in themselves the worst. That

is, they may not be those that are in themselves the very most base and violent sins. Our most dangerous sins are those to which we ourselves are most inclined. They are the sins that most easily beset us. Probably we are not tempted to commit murder or midnight robbery. But if less abominable sins cling closely to us, and we do not cast them off, they may destroy our souls. I do not mean to say that sins in small matters are as bad as sins in great matters. To have a single bad habit, or several bad habits, in things of slight importance, is not so bad as to be committing public crimes, or to be leading an utterly irreligious and profligate life. There are degrees of sin and of sinfulness. A man who means to obey God is a better man, though some sins may stick upon him, than a man who thinks nothing of God, and cares nothing for duty. But the man who means to obey God, ought to mean to do it in all things. He should be careful that he does. He should not be willing to leave any particular sins undisturbed and keeping their hold upon him. If he does so leave them, in so far he is not obedient to God. And

those particular sins, if he loves them, and if that is why he keeps on in them, may destroy his soul. The sins to which we are inclined are dangerous, whether they are great or small. Besides, the man who seems to be committing only small sins may be kept back from committing great open sins by no love for God, or for goodness, but only by fear of exposure and public shame.

Besides, too, we must not in our thoughts separate sins too far from one another, as if they were so many distinct things; and as if one might be chosen by itself, and all the rest cast off. Sin is, in the substance of it, one thing, however it shows itself; and one sin, chosen and followed, might make a sinful person. The text, if we look narrowly at it, does not speak of *sins* that easily beset us, but of *sin* that does it, as if sin were really all one thing, and as if what we were to guard against were not so much separate, easily besetting sins, but rather the easily besetting and clinging force or quality of all sin. So truly it is.

Sin might thus be thought of as an evil beast

or monster, strong and cunning to catch us, and using many ways to do it. If the beast does catch and hold us, it may make no difference in the end whether he holds us by main force of his jaws and both his paws, or by the firm grasp of a single claw. If he holds us, that is enough. So the hold of what we call a single sin might keep us in the power of sin. It does not matter for the form of words or the figure of speech, it is this easily besetting and holding or clinging quality of sins, or sin, that we must guard against.

And further, we must consider that though some sins or sin remaining and clinging upon us may not, in the mercy of God, utterly ruin our souls, yet still our character will be marred by it, and the force of our lives for good will be greatly lessened. It is these remaining sins of Christian men and women that most of all hold back the progress of the Lord's cause in the world.

And now while we attend for a little time to some further thoughts about besetting sins, I hope you will not be much busied, any of you, in applying what is said to the other

persons. That would be of no use, either to you or to them. But if there is anything that any of you can apply to yourselves, that may do some good.

We may look at some of the reasons why sin easily besets us; or why particular sins do.

One reason is that sin is deceitful or blinding in its own nature. It looks better than it is. We are easily misled as to the badness of it, and the harm it may do us. We are warned in the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians, to "put off concerning the former conversation" or manner of life, "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." He writes to the Thessalonians of the "deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish"—a dreadful phrase. In the epistle to the Hebrews believers are warned to exhort one another daily lest any of them should be hardened through "the deceitfulness of sin." This deceitfulness of sin shows itself most with those sins to which for any reason we are the most inclined. It is part of the besetting quality of sin that it

misleads us as to what it really is, and as to the mischief that is really in it.

In thinking of this subject, the question has arisen in my mind, whether or not most persons know what their besetting sins are. I am not altogether sure what the answer should be. But I think that most people do in fact know;—that is, the most of those who have much thought in any way about the matter of their sins. I think there is usually some knowledge as to where one's greatest besetments are. I think the truth is that there is a tendency to make the sin which is known to be cherished to appear to be less of a sin than it really is. We are not ignorant of the fact that at a certain point there is a liability with us to do some wrong thing; but we let ourselves be blinded concerning it, coming to think that this wrong thing may not after all be a very bad thing.

Look now closely upon yourself to see if there is any such point of danger with you. See if there are wrong habits or tendencies with yourself that do not give you so much concern, or trouble you so much as they ought

to. If your mind goes now to such a point, there is where sin is besetting you. It is there that you should begin now in making moral changes upon yourself. Begin there, where you are most in danger.

Another reason for the besetting power of sin may often be found in peculiarities of natural disposition. Our dispositions are inherited. They came down upon us from our fathers and mothers, or from those before them from whom our natural lives have sprung. We have in this way native inclinations or aptitudes, or repugnances of various sorts, and these may have a strong influence upon us. A person may be naturally lively and hopeful, or cautious and timid. He may be quick in temper or slow, sunny or sullen. Some are naturally generous, some are jealous. Some are close and covetous, some are cunning and ready to be false as by an inborn instinct. So there are great differences as to the ease with which different persons are led into many right or wrong ways of life. Now we are not responsible for our dispositions to begin with. They came upon us without any act of ours.

We could not help their being what they were. But we are responsible for what we come to be as we grow up in life, whatever our dispositions were to begin with. Some people make a great mistake at this point. They excuse themselves in wrong conduct on the ground that they are disposed that way and cannot be expected to do differently. So a woman who is given to bluntness and roughness of speech will often say, "That is my way. I cannot help it. I must speak right out. That is the way I was made." But why must she speak right out harshly, when it is wrong to do it? She must *not* speak out. She must stop her quick and heedless speech, and she must learn to speak considerately and properly. She must; she can. None of you are slaves altogether to your natural dispositions. You have reason, you have opportunity to observe and reflect; you have conscience, you have heard the word of God. You know what is right. You have freewill, the power to choose and act. If your disposition is not right, you must change it. This is one of the first things for you to see to. If there is any-

thing wrong in your natural making up, you had better alter it. You had better make yourself what you ought to be. It is a dreadful thing to be going on made up wrong in yourself, and not trying to change it. And if you have sins besetting you and sticking closely to you in that way, it is the first duty and hope of your life to be casting them off.

There is another occasion of evil besetments, that is very curious in its nature, and that is not often enough thought of. There is a peculiar yoking together of things good and bad with us that is ready to lead us into trouble. Certain good qualities of mind or heart pass easily over into certain correlative bad qualities, and the good slips off into evil. Thus the great good trait of generosity is sometimes joined with a slackness of thought concerning promises and obligations, and the free-hearted man may not be careful to pay his just debts. Good nature in general tends somewhat to become easy-going and irresponsible. The genial and companionable man may often have a dislike for steady and hard work, and sometimes his good cheer slumps into looseness and

profligacy. Intemperate men are often companionable men. The good qualities of industry and thriftiness run over into avarice and sordid lusts. Prudence grinds away into penuriousness and hard-heartedness. Superior business capacity may bring liability to severity of judgment respecting those less competent or less fortunate. Clearness of mind and the capital power of accurate discernment may cut its way easily into the critical and cavilling habit, and even into self-conceit. Mental caution is near to moral cowardice. Truthfulness and frankness may lie close to bluntness and heedlessness. Moral firmness and fixed integrity of purpose pass over into an unaccommodating and difficult spirit, hard to please. And even a temper quiet and retiring may become, not far off, sensitive, self-conscious and obstinate. How not uncommon it is for modest and retiring people to be very set. There are many such pairs or couplings together of dispositions good and bad, the bad so connected with the good that one is easily led off upon it, unless he is always careful. It is as if there were

a pair of horses harnessed together, and one of the pair were always ready to pull off out of the road. The driver would need to keep his eye always on the horses.

So are we beset. If we are sympathetic, we may also be passionate, and apt to get angry before we know it. It is a good thing to be quick in sympathy, and it is a bad thing to be quick in anger. If we are conscientious and scrupulous, we may be shortly censorious, and may become judges of evil thoughts toward others. It is a good thing to be conscientious, and a bad thing to be censorious. These besetments are real, and the danger great. We need to be careful every day and hour about the kindred sins that lie close to the best things within us.

Another reason for the power of particular sins upon us may lie in the nature of our occupations. The sharp competitions of business sometimes make men hard-hearted, or they may lead to deceitfulness and falsehood. The Lord has spoken of His word as sometimes choked by the deceitfulness of riches. The deceitfulness of riches beguiles many who are

never rich. So the farmer, with one of the best of all occupations, may grow narrow in mind, living upon his fields and busied with the growth of his own things, until he ceases to look out far from himself, and he finds it hard even on the Sabbath day not to be thinking mostly of his crops and his cattle.

Then our companionships may lead us into evil. Many people, especially young people, are inclined to do what they see others doing. Thus a young man who forms the drinking habit, begins commonly by being with those that drink. He has no particular liking himself for strong drinks, but he sees others taking them. This is no very good reason for putting one's self under the power of such an appetite. Thus people go away with crowds of others on the Sabbath day. I say nothing now as to how the day may best be kept. Let every man consider and be persuaded in his own mind. But no bad way of life becomes a safe and good way merely by its being made a broad way, and by the walking and riding in it of many men.

Then the force of habit may become a source

of danger. If for any cause we have done some wrong thing and have repeated it, this power of habit is ready to come in and fix the evil on us. The judgment and conscience, often overcome or slighted at that point, become weakened or blinded at that spot. The relish for the sinful indulgence increases; and the bodily being itself, in those parts that run most close to the mind or soul, takes on a setness toward that sin. Such habitual sins stick hard upon us. The body itself is a companion to the soul that needs to be looked on with carefulness, as well as with thankfulness and hope.

There is another dangerous besetment through the unlike conditions, or the changing conditions of human life. This is not often enough thought of. The dangers of different periods of life are not the same; but there are dangers in every period. Each variety of exposure needs to be guarded against as it comes in its turn upon us. Watchfulness against the follies of childhood or youth will not serve to guard us as against the follies of middle life, or of old age. The conditions may

be quite reversed. The young person may need to be warned against impulsiveness, against quickness or hotness of feeling or speech. The older person may need to watch against dulness or coldness of feeling. The boy needs to learn the value of money; the older man needs to know that money may be of no value unless it is well spent. The heart of the child may be too soft, the heart of the man too hard.

In such ways does sin beset us; by its own deceitfulness, by the peculiarities of natural dispositions with ourselves, or by peculiar arrangements or couplings of dispositions; by our occupations; by our companionships; by the power of habit on us, and by the changing conditions of the various periods of human life. It is not likely that there is any one of you here that has not some such special besetment. If there were any one of you that thought that he was in no such danger, I should fear that his danger was great. It is well that we should be charitable concerning the sins of others. It is not well that we should be careless concerning our own sins, or should be

ready to find excuses for them. Sins or sinful tendencies with us are not things to be let alone, or easily put up with. They are to be resisted, and quickly cut off. If they are not cut off quickly, they may grow too strong ever to be cut off. You know the remedies. You know the Helper of your soul. You know the grace of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who offers you at once pardon for sin and help out of its power. I trust that you have welcomed Him, as your Friend and the Keeper of your soul. It is time that it should be done. If you are following Him, you will hear His voice, calling on you to watch and pray. He does not call you to perpetual fearfulness, or to the bondage of distressing anxieties and misgivings. He calls on you to pray that you may walk in faith and courage, in freedom and in hope. Listen to His voice. Listen to His voice until you go in at the doors of heaven.

X

MEMORY IN MAN

X

MEMORY IN MAN

Psalm 143:5. I remember the days of old.

REMEMBRANCE is one of the most simple of all the acts or conditions of life, and yet one of the most wonderful. We carry along constantly through our lives some part of all that we pass through. It is in some ways a shadowy past; and in some ways it is most real. The occasions of our lives do not themselves ever return. The stream of life flows by us, and does not stop or run back again. Our opportunities do not remain or return. There is nothing that is gone more hopelessly than yesterday, or the last hour or minute. But in another way it is not so. We can look back upon the last hour, or upon yesterday, and seem to see them both. The very feelings that we had then sometimes come back and become real to us again. And the things that made us glad or sorry yesterday, may be pleasing or displeasing to us today. But sometimes

our feelings are very different from what they were at that past time. We may be sorry we did what we once took pleasure in doing, or painfulness may change to pleasure. But however it may be as to our feelings, whether they are the same or different, we can seem to see the past occasion, and can think plainly of ourselves as there.

So we have these memory pictures of the past, partly real and partly unreal, as pictures are. We carry them all along with us, and can look upon them whenever we please. Some of them we are forced to look upon sometimes when we would rather not see them. Most of the pictures keep well. Some fade out partly, or even wholly. But these are apt to be the things that were only told to us, or things in which we were not much interested. The main things that we have had much to do with are not often lost out of mind. Whether anything is really lost out of all remembrance is not certain. Sometimes things flash out into sight plainly that had seemed to be wholly forgotten. It is as if among all these pictures, some were to get mislaid,

or covered up, so that they are not found always when we look for them. Or they may be so covered with dust that it is not easy to tell what they are. But perhaps none of the pictures are lost. How clearly we can look upon the path of life by which we have come, many of us through long stretches of years, back to youth and the days of early childhood!

Memory is not the only thing that we have of the past or can bring out of the past. Most of our present life has grown out of past things and doings. So we have habits, which are the effects on us of what we have often done, and we have capacities, or aptitudes and powers of skill which come of training or practice in past time, and we have a character, of whatever sort it is, that has been fashioned and built up out of our former purposes and doings. But these capacities or habits, or traits of character are wrought within us in such a way that they have their effect upon us usually without our thinking at all of the past occurrences and practices out of which they grew. Memory brings to us in a different way a certain conscious knowledge of the past, as if we

could look back and see the sources out of which our present characters have sprung. If any of you have fallen into bad ways of living, probably you can think now of just the time when you began to go in those ways. Perhaps you can see where you took the very first step. You can probably remember how you thought at particular times that it would be better for you not to do such and such things; and yet you yielded to some evil desire and did them. All of you can remember mistakes you have made, which you have been sorry for, and which have perhaps continued to affect you ever since. So also you can think of times, no doubt, when you have resisted some evil and turned from it. You can remember when you did some thing, or entered on some right purpose of life with a strong effort, and can think how you kept upon it with patience. Thus your memory connects your present self with your past life and doings, and helps to make your character personal to yourself. It helps you to trace yourself and see yourself in all the way in which you have come to be what you are. Indeed if you had no memory

you could have no knowledge of yourself as having any continuous personal life. The lamp of memory lights up the past behind you, and helps you to see in part where you have come from and what you are.

This light of memory on past events, and on ourselves, we cannot entirely shut off, even if we try to. We can help our memory by attending carefully to things that we wish to be able afterward to recall; and we can strengthen it by use and practice. Or we may neglect it, and go on without taking much thought about what is past. But still with the least care that we might give, we shall remember very many things. Sometimes people try to forget their past lives, but it is not a very easy thing to do. And it would often happen that the more one tried to forget, the more clear the memory would be. We never can shut up behind us the past out of which we have come. We never can be sure either that anything is forgotten because we may not for a long while have thought much about it. Something may make it come up very clearly again. Old things grow fresh, and scarcely

anything seems to be completely lost out of our minds.

Many things are carried on in the memories of many men. No one life is alone in the world. If one man's memory fails in some particular, some other person may bring that thing to his mind. So any of you may be reminded by some one else of things that seemed long forgotten. Perhaps it was a pleasant thing that you have been made thus to think of; perhaps it was something you would have been glad never to have remembered again. No doubt this has happened to you often. It may happen as to anything good or bad that you ever said or did.

The act of remembrance with us is very likely to be joined with some exercise of consideration and reflection upon what is remembered. We do not stop with barely calling the thing to mind; but we often make some mental observation and pronounce some sort of judgment upon it. The best opportunity for reflection upon an action is often some time after the thing is done. Our minds are then in a more considerate temper. The impulses

or desires that pushed or pulled us one way or another at first, pass away or grow less strong and eager. Recollection is a more sober thing. It is more reflective in its nature. It is more likely to be true and fair and just. Thoughts of what is right especially are more apt to come into our minds when we remember the doings of the past. Conscience comes into exercise and reason speaks to us of what should or should not have been done.

The moral turn of remembrance is a great feature of human life. Each one of you can observe how in your own experience you continually pass judgment upon what you have done when you remember it. You do not stop with remembering the thing. You approve or disapprove of it. And you praise or condemn yourself for doing it. The youngest of you children know how it is that what you have done at home or at school often looks different to you as you think of it afterward; and you are glad or sorry about it in a way different from what you felt when you were doing it. All of you who are older have had a great deal of such experience. You pronounce judgment

upon yourselves, in the way of praise or blame, by this act of remembrance, many times every day you live. Or if you do not, it is probably because your mind and conscience are not so much alive upon such matters as they ought to be.

This connection of memory with the making of moral judgments on action and life, has much to do with the appointments of the government of God respecting us. Our lives are moral in remembrance. Moral responsibilities from all the past lie upon us. The moral concerns of our youth are not ended in manhood or old age. There is no reason to think that they will ever end. It is true that our present exercise of memory depends upon the action of bodily agencies connected with the mind. When we sleep we forget, and we might think that when the body dies, we should forget forever, and the mind itself would perish. But this would be to give up the hope of immortality, which we do not wish to do, and must not do. We do not know much ourselves of where the powers of life are really seated. This connection of memory in man with moral

judgments is in itself suggestive of continuing and lasting moral ends for man. Human remembrance itself is in part a kind of lifting of human life out of the midst of things that are only present and temporal, and a raising of it up among things that seem to be steadfast and eternal. Human recollection joins also closely with human foresight. While our minds are going back to the past, they are ready to go also most easily, almost with the same stroke of thought, onward to the future. And as moral reflection and moral judgment go readily with all remembrance, so moral expectations incline to go with all foresights. When we cast our thoughts onward to the future, moral concerns still press upon us. All these things are signs upon our present being that we are, as the Bible declares, the children of an immortal life. They make it easy for us to believe that though our bodies in the earthly form they wear are frail and perishable, our souls are conjoined with some more steadfast being, and are appointed to endure in the midst of everlasting remembrances and eternal expectations. All our

better hopes, all our brighter thoughts, incline us to such a belief.

In such lights our human lives seem great and precious. Human remembrance is a sign of greatness. It is a hold we have upon all that with which we have ever been concerned; as if the rational soul of man might put a species of immortality on all that it had ever touched. Such memory is distinctive of man, and is a part of the greatness of life. Other things in the soul of man fit with these, and belong with greatness.

Man is great; the Bible does not represent man as small, except in comparison with all the greatness of God. It does not say that man's life is poor. It says, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" his life? It does not say that man is insignificant. It says that he is sinful, and has need to be turned from sin. It does not say that the things that concern the life of man are of small account. It says that they are of immeasurable importance and of endless worth. It bids us take care respecting these things, since they will keep their hold upon us and affect us forever. It

is not religion that will make you small, it is unbelief, or worldliness, or indifference to the things of your soul. Because your life is serious, it is great. And because it is great it is serious. All great things are serious. Great capacities, great opportunities, great recollections, great moral and rational issues of life, —such things make life serious.

I hope none of you are sorry your lives are serious. Would you rather have them trifling and empty? Would you rather be frivolous and small, instead of being serious and great? But you cannot help it. If you should not choose to be serious, the greatness of a serious life is put upon you. You are shut into the human state. You cannot go back out of it, and close its doors against you. You will be always a man, whatever sort of a man you may be. You will always look back on your past life, as a man looks on life. You will have human remembrances, human judgments on yourself, human reflections and human expectations. You will know forever that you have lived and are living under the just law of God. I hope you are glad now to know that you are

under the law of God. I hope you will never have reason to be utterly ashamed when you think of it.

But I think you all know that the sense of shame as to wrong things we have done is very hard to be gotten rid of. When we think of such things, long after, we are ashamed. Sometimes it seems as if this sense of self-reproach in remembrance of the bad things we have done was more tenacious than the sense of satisfaction in what good things we have done. I do not know but it is. When we think of anything we have done right, it seems only natural and suitable that we should have done that; and there may be no great merit in it. But to do wrong is needless and unfit and disgraceful. Sinfulness seems clear and flat disgrace. I do not think it can ever be an easy thing to get rid of the sense of the meanness that must have been in us in the doing of the wrong things we have done in our past lives. I think we come to need the help of God, to cover up our sins from ourselves as well as from Him. Our sins are in our book of remembrance, as they are in His.

They need to be blotted out—or in some way written over, in our book, and in His.

These are some of the things that belong with our human remembrance. I think they are fitted to make us careful as to the life we lead. The things you do go into yourself, and stay with you. You always have them to remember. Do you not wish to be careful about the things that you put into your own mind, to stay there forever? Is it not an important matter how you make up this store of remembrance, which you are always to keep within yourself? Do you not think it is a practical matter what you give yourself to remember? What are the things that you are concerned about now? If you are a child, perhaps you wish to have holidays at school, and plays at home; and there is no harm in these, in their way. If you are a young person, perhaps you wish to have pleasant company, and perhaps you are thinking and hoping that you may have an agreeable wife or a good husband; and these things are well enough, and quite important to think of. If you are an older man or woman, perhaps you

are wishing that you had money, and are working for it. Or you would like a better house, or more land, or a horse, or new furniture, or new clothes, or better food for yourselves or your children; or perhaps you are considering how you can send your children to school a little longer, or perhaps you are wishing that you did not have to work so hard as you do, and are planning for more ease in life. These things in their way may be all more or less desirable. They will have something to do with your comfort for a few years. But what care are you taking for the memories of life that you are laying up to keep in your minds forever? Are you taking as much pains about the things that you are putting into your soul, to stay there, as you are for the things you keep outside of you for a little while? Suppose there were a man who had a hand-cart furnished him, and some money given him, and he was told that he might go along through the streets of a town, and purchase or gather in any way such things as he chose, and such as he could carry in his cart, and might have for his own all the things he thus carried. And

suppose that man should be very careful of the hand-cart—which would be all right—and should put it under some shed every night, or whenever it rained, or when the dew fell, and should be always wiping off the mud and dust, and oiling the wheels of the cart, but should not take any pains at all to get things that were good for anything to put into that cart, but should fill it up with sticks and sods and common stones, so that when he got through he would have nothing that was worth anything in that cart? Suppose then he had to leave the cart, and carry on all the rest of his life in his hands the sticks and dust and bits of rubbish? How short of sight would that man be! You take care, it may be, of the hand-cart, the outward present life—what have you gained of your own in your soul?

XI

THE TONGUE—"THE GLORY OF OUR FRAME"

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THE TONGUE—"THE GLORY OF OUR FRAME"

Psalm 108:1. I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

A SOMEWHAT similar passage occurs in the sixteenth Psalm; "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth." And again in the thirtieth; "That my glory may sing praise unto Thee and not be silent." In each of these cases the word "glory" refers to the organs of speech, or especially to the tongue, which has always been taken popularly as a chief representative of these organs. It is an expression made use of for the sake of variety, and in the spirit of poetry, and with the same meaning, for substance, as if the writer had said, My mouth, or lips, or tongue shall sing and give praise. The sense is therefore correctly given by Watts in his version of the thirtieth Psalm, when he says:

"My tongue, the glory of my frame,
Shall ne'er be silent of Thy name."

There is however a distinctive force in these passages, from the use of this particular title; and there is a suggestiveness in this very term "glory" as applied to the tongue, or organs of speech.

Its capacity for the uses of speech is a peculiar glory of the human frame. This capacity is due chiefly to the structure of the parts pertaining to the throat, and the action of the tongue and lips is less essential, though very important. But the lips and tongue, being forward and open to observation, have taken to themselves the most distinction as agents in speech. It matters little for the division of the credit among the members of the body. The great thing is that with man the body is so formed that it can be made to speak. Some others indeed of the animal tribes are able to utter articulate sounds, in imitation of the human voice; though there are but few that can, and these do it imperfectly. There is no other animal, I suppose, that is equipped, in a merely bodily point of view, nearly as well for the uses of speech as man is. In this respect, therefore, his tongue

with its associated organs, is a glory of his frame.

The fact however that some other animals are able, more or less adequately, to make the same sounds that man does in speech, may show us that there is something else to be thought of in this connection besides bodily structure. At the same time this faculty of speech, however it comes to be exercised, lies, in a natural or physical point of view, at the foundation, in a large degree, of the distinctive progress that man has made above his fellows of the other animal tribes.

A very large portion of the distinctive knowledge that man has is what he has acquired in some way from other men, either those living with him or those that have lived before him. And the most of what he acquires in this way comes through speech oral or written. But animals learn very little in this manner. I think that they do not learn much in any way from other animals. The most of what any animal knows, he knows either by instinct, or by his own observations, or his own reflections. Instinct is knowledge or aptitude

transmitted naturally and unconsciously from one's progenitors. It is of vast and primary importance as to all animal life; and the appointment of this possession affords a striking proof of the wisdom and goodness of the Author of all these living things. The discernments of instinct are always more swift and often more subtle than the penetrations of reason. But instinct goes only to certain fixed points, and has to do mainly with the essential necessities of physical life. And in any case it is not an instrument of conscious and rational acquisition or progress. Beyond what is instinctive the animal learns whatever he comes to know mostly by his own observations and experiences, and by such reflections as he is able to make upon them. He gets little help from parents, companions or teachers. Thus I suppose the young bird or chicken is but little wiser for anything his mother teaches, though she is a most active and careful mother after her fashion. If one of the brood were taken away and put wholly by himself, with a chance only to live, I suppose he would grow up nearly as well informed and

capable a bird or fowl as any of the others that were left with their mother, and with one another. But if the same thing were done with a child of a human family, in any civilized land,—if that child were separated from human companionship, it would drop back out of all measurement from the others in the family from which it was taken. It would fall far beneath the state even of any common savage; for the savage has learned much from his fellow-men. This single thing, instruction by human companionship, makes up a large part of all the intellectual difference between man and the birds and beasts. And of human companionship, speech is the chief element.

The isolation and solitariness of the animal tribes, as compared with ours, is almost complete. They can make calls respecting food, indicating either the possession or the want of it. They can give signs of danger. They can make sounds expressive of satisfaction or composure, of affection, of joy or grief, and these are understood by others of their kind. They are appreciative of one another, in many cases, in their companionship together, and we may

be glad to think that their social enjoyments are not small. But their speech at the widest is within narrow bounds. Their utterances for the most part, are monotonous and vague, and they are altogether inadequate to the conveyance of variety or delicacy of sentiment and feeling. And beyond this, as to thought, in the full sense of that word,—for the results of comparison and reflection, for general conclusions drawn from the experiences and observations of life, for the products of contemplation upon one's own being, upon the outward world or upon universal existence—for all this the beast or bird has no tongue or speech. Within this range of mental action, his thoughts, whatever they are, must remain mostly, if not wholly, within himself. His stores of learning and reflection were all begun by him, and they all end with himself. If there be a sheep or horse or elephant of capacity somewhat unusual for his race, and of studious and reflective habits, though he lays up a considerable store of intelligence in his life-time, as I think sometimes happens, yet he is not able to teach any of his compan-

ions or his children. When he dies all his wisdom will die with him. No other sheep or horse or elephant will carry any of his learning or discretion along into the next generation. We may wonder whether any such studious and reflective beast has ever any concern in his own mind with regard to his inability to make known his wisdom; and whether he has any desires that chafe against the narrow bounds of his physical capacity. We cannot be sure that he has not. But yet such desires could hardly fashion themselves into anything of definiteness and continued clearness. The very lack of the power of speech itself would prevent it. Speech and language have much to do with all thinking; so that thoughts are not easily framed or set in any order without words. Words are the packages in which thoughts are contained. They are the measures, the baskets, the cups, for the holding of thought, and thought without words runs away and is lost, like water spilled upon the ground. For this cause alone the contemplations of the beast must be of a vague kind only, being probably little more than a mass of impres-

sions and impulses and unassorted memories of former experiences. The boundaries of animal being in this direction are thus probably so close and solid that there is no looking beyond them, and no thought therefore, of any confinement—much as one who had no eye for color would have no natural sense of deprivation in not seeing colors.

It may then be true that the beasts have no unfulfilled desires and longings reaching far beyond their capacities, into that which is moral and ideal, rational and eternal, as has man. Reason in its own nature is universal, though the personal powers of rational man are limited. Still there shine in upon man glimmering rays of light from distant orbs and from immeasurable spaces beyond himself. Man is thus not wholly at home within the narrow bounds of his earthly being. And in this present unrest which he feels there may be found some promise of enlargement in another and endless life. We do not know that the confinement is felt, or the implied promise discerned by the animal tribes beneath us. It is most natural to think that the desires and

expectations of the beast or bird are in tune with the framing of his physical life, and that his intellectual state corresponds throughout to the measure of limitation which the incapacity for speech implies or suggests.

No one should wish to belittle the capacities of the inferior animals, which are indeed in many ways wonderful. As to language, some of them readily learn the meaning of many terms of human speech. They come to know that certain words and phrases are associated with particular motions, either their own or those of men; and they understand in many things what they are expected to do. But this does not of necessity imply anything more than the memory of the connection between these particular words and these actions. It is a thing far removed from the wide gift of rational language as it is found with man. Even such beasts, or especially such birds as are able to utter articulate sounds, do not appear to take up that faculty and turn it to any practical rational use. The parrot is not, so far as I know, more capable or more wise for his talking.

But however we may regard it, and whatever we may think of as possible with any of the animals, it is altogether certain that the actual power of speech stands in a most significant manner at the boundaries of reason, as between man and the brute creation. Speech is the instrument of thought. It is needful to all clear intelligence. In the absence of it, the powers of genuine reason are undeveloped, and in some respects wholly wanting.

Speech is a distinctive instrument or mark of rationality in man. For a deep reason therefore, the bodily organs that are employed in speech may be called "the glory of our frame." They are the signs of the rational eminence of man. They are associated with all his earthly progress, and with all his immortal hopes. As a speaking creature, he belongs in the realm of reason and has about him immeasurable opportunities and prospects, and heavenly companionships. He may most appropriately praise God with his tongue—his glory—since it is as a speaking creature that he has spiritual fellowship with

his Maker, and belongs, morally and rationally, in the household of God.

It is because man has a tongue that he has traditions, counsels from his fathers, proverbs, histories, recorded memories of the past, warnings, inspirations, all treasured knowledge in science, of the outer world,—all knowledge of social life and government, of man in his relation to his fellows,—laws, ordered and proclaimed commands embodying civil wisdom and moral obligation,—poetries, pictures of life in its heightened lines,—melodies and rhythmic harmonies in word and tone, linking the soul of man with the creation around him, —reasonings, sifted and certain conclusions or thoughtful hopes of man concerning himself, the world he lives in, the Power above him, and the destinies awaiting him beyond the present time. All these, all consciously transmitted observations, reflections, imaginations, learnings and anticipations—all these are of the tongue of man. His speech stands at all the doorways of knowledge, of affection and of faith. By reason of his tongue, his speech, he enters into all the life of his fellow-men.

By his speech he hears the voice of God in providence, and comprehends the meaning of His works in nature. By his speech he receives the personal word of God in revelation and has set before him the great precepts and promises pertaining to everlasting life. And by his speech he knows himself to be and indeed is in the image of God. His tongue is thus the glory of his frame, and his rational speech is the glory of his life. Great praise is thus fittingly put in the Scripture upon the tongue and the organs of speech. "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom." It is a "well of life." The tongue is a "tree of life," and is as "choice silver."

The tongue of man has therefore, manifestly, the highest uses. It is the instrument of communication between the spiritual being of man and all other spiritual being. It opens the way between man and man and between man and God.

Some practical reflections may be briefly made upon this theme. It is peculiarly important and needful that this tongue of ours

should be rightly managed. It must be put to good uses and to no other. It is a great and honorable thing, and must be greatly and worthily dealt by. The more honorable any faculty is, the more forcible is the obligation to use it with honor. Slighter things may be less cared for, but your tongue is no small thing. Your tongue matters more than does your finger or your foot. Your tongue belongs to your rational soul. It is that by which chiefly you have communication with the souls of other men. It is that largely by which your thoughts and desires are carried up to God. You must be mindful of what it carries to your fellow-men and of what it takes up to God. You do not wish to abandon your highest powers and let them run to waste. You must take care of your tongue, your speech, or you will lose the best part of your life. Your tongue is so near your heart, your soul, that your care of it is like the care of your soul, your life itself. You must take care of your tongue.

I shall not take up much time now in laying down any particular rules to be followed in

the managing of the tongue. I do not suppose your care for your tongue needs to be formal and pottering. You need not be always weighing every word you speak, and trying to be sober and grave and wise every minute. That is not in nature, nor in the best wisdom either. Lightness and playfulness have their place. I am inclined to think there is a place for inattentive or easy-going talk, that signifies little or nothing. Life is not meant to be always tense and strained towards its ends. But your life must have its ends, and you must keep it on the main right lines. So you should make your speech steadily truthful, sensible,—prevailingly sensible—cheerful, hopeful, trustful, kindly and helpful. And you should keep it clear of all opposite things, of all foolishness (preaching foolishness!), of all profaneness, of all indecency and vulgarity, and of all approach to them, and of all envy, bitterness and hatefulness.

These few words contain a great deal—steadily truthful, sensible, cheerful, hopeful, trustful, kindly and helpful. You see that there is a stress on steadiness and constancy

in these things. What was said just now about allowing sometimes a certain amount of carelessness and ease in talk, had reference to natural mental relaxations and spaces of playfulness or rest. It was not meant that you should be forgetful ever of great fixed moral obligations. It belongs to the quality of all high Christian life, that it is always high, or tends always to be so. Our lives are spoiled too far by our fallings away too often, too easily, from our best purposes. We are too patient with ourselves in such fallings off. Everywhere Christians are needed that can be depended upon to keep the high path of faith and duty, always. It is needful that you should yourself be such a person as that—keeping steadily the high road. It would be a small thing in the line of goodness if you should be truthful a considerable part of the time, and not always. You need to be a person sure to speak the truth—if you speak at all. You are not a truthful person unless it is so. It would not come to much if you were only often cheerful and trustful in your temper of life, as your words show it,—you need

to have this color of Christian trust shining on you, and shining from you right along, day and night. So as to kindness, your words should be always kindly. They should never be bitter or hateful. You can be surely, constantly, unfailingly kind in what you say. Be sure you keep your mark high in all these things touching on the moral tone of your life, as your speech shows it.

It may not be the easiest thing to control your tongue in all these matters. But it is the highest thing. And is it not that at which you are aiming? It is a high thing that you have a tongue to control. You are set in a lofty place as a creature with this gift of rational speech, lifting you up above every other order of occupant of the globe, and setting you within sight of God. Can you not be willing to be careful of your speech?

And now you may see that if you should fail in this matter of your tongue, your speech, the failure would be a great one. This follows from all our previous considerations. Speech is a great distinctive sign of man. It stands by the borders of reason and humanity. It

marks you as within the bounds of things moral—the possibility of things holy and divine. It is a dark thing to turn from so much of good and change it to evil. Your tongue is the glory of your frame,—would you make it a tool of falsehood or foulness, or hatred, or of aimless and endless idleness and frivolity of speech? Would God hold you guiltless for that? Would you think yourself that you were guiltless? The endowment is one of singular honor; you must see that the abusing of it is of singular shame.

So the Bible, over against the choice words in which it describes a pure and fitting speech has a corresponding darkness and severity of language respecting a false and ill-mannered tongue. It is a sharp sword. It is a bow drawn. It is an arrow. It is a serpent. The poison of asps is on it. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. It is a fire. It is a world of iniquity. It defiles the whole body. It sets on fire the course of nature. It is itself set on fire of hell. It is a dreadful picture. It is a dreadful thing that is pictured. Beneath an open or a fair face may lurk this

unruly evil, this tongue of a snake, this flame out of hell.

I hope there is no one here with such a tongue. If there is a single one such, you who are in such a case, with such a tongue, must see what to do. Put out the fire. Take off the poison. Make haste, repent and pray. We must put better thoughts before us. Let us turn our lives, our lips, to higher uses. Let us learn the fitting speech of reason, of faith and love, and everlasting life. Let us speak to one another in truth and kindness and helpfulness. Let us talk together as becomes the children of God, the followers of Christ and the heirs of heaven. Let us praise God with our tongues.

XII

THOUGHTS OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

XII

THOUGHTS OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY *

Psalm 1:3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Matthew 5:48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The materials and objects of the natural world, within which we belong, are sometimes spoken of as arranged in three divisions which are called the "mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms." They are "kingdoms" indeed, though no such special thought may have given them their name, in that the mighty power of nature and of God has sway everywhere upon them and within them. The stone and the tree are alike subjected to the force of gravity and to the control of chemical and other affinities or repugnancies that lay hold

* A Sermon preached by Dr. Rice in his former parish, just before the arrival of a new pastor.

irresistibly upon every particle of their substance. But in some respects the tree seems to have powers of motion or of growth of its own, as the stone does not: the force of life, unknown as to what it is, belongs to the tree, and not to the stone. The stone does not feel, as we suppose, the shower or the sunshine. The tree answers to them in freshening beauty and in growth. With an animal, life has a wider range; and the bird directs its flight among the trees by a choice of its own. The bird or the horse can be tamed and made to follow its owner's call, as the tree cannot. With man the range of life is still more wide and high. He can consider himself, and the things becoming to him, as the bird and the horse can do but dimly, if at all. He can listen a little to the voice of nature and of God, and can gather something of purposes above himself as worthy and needful to be chosen and followed. His life rises within the bounds of that which is reasonable and moral; and he can understand that there is a God, whose image he is made to bear, and whose perfections he ought to consider and to copy.

The government of God is adjusted differently to these differing orders of being and of life. The stone He fashions in its crystal shapes, and moves, it may be, by powers directly from Himself. The tree He plants and sustains in a life that shapes itself, in part, by forces within itself. Man He upholds directly in natural life, but leads to the befitting forms and results of life by appeals to that reason and that sense of duty which have their home and their seat of power within the soul of man.

When a tree has begun to grow after its kind the main thing for it is that it should be set in a good place. The force of this figure in the first Psalm is most distinctly seen in dry lands, as in Syria, or in some parts of our own Western country, where the trees line the river banks. It is the tree planted by the streams of water whose leaf does not wither, and that brings its fruit in its season. The place where a man lives is often very important; but it is not so important altogther and always as the place of a tree is, for a man can often do something himself to make the place

where he is a good one to live in, and he ought to do it.

So beyond anything else in the world, we men are answerable for the results of our own lives. My purpose in this discourse is to set our responsibility for our own lives a little before us.

It is the purpose of our Sabbath assembling, and of all our religious observances and activities to bring our lives into their proper frame before God and in the presence of one another. That is, to gain for ourselves a befitting human character. In this high sense the Christian church is the school of manhood.

The business of the Christian preacher is to help us, what he can, in gaining within ourselves these fitting results in our own personal character. This business of the preacher is sometimes quite misunderstood. He is looked upon as if he were some sort of a performer, and men watch to see how he does his part—Does he speak easily enough and rapidly enough? Are his words well chosen, and his illustrations apt? Are his gestures graceful? And is the preacher (in short,) a sufficiently bright and capable man?

Now these things are of some importance. It is proper at times to consider them. But they are not the main things. There might be a school teacher who was very quick and dexterous in putting mathematical figures and demonstrations upon the blackboard; and his scholars might say—"How quick and bright he is!" It would be better for them to consider whether they had gotten their lesson in geometry. The good teacher is the teacher who helps his scholars to understand their lessons, and especially the good teacher is the one who teaches his scholars to love to study and to get their lessons. The good preacher is the preacher who helps his hearers to know how they ought to live in the presence of God and along with one another; and especially the good preacher is the one whose hearers themselves learn to love to know and keep the law of God in all their lives.

The place then to test a sermon is in yourself. To know whether you have heard a good sermon, look within yourself and see if it is doing you good—or moving you toward it. If the sermon is not making you any better,

it is either a poor sermon or else you are making a poor use of it. These thoughts of personal responsibility with each one of us for the right shaping of our own lives, as the children of God, are, I hope, to be constantly with us.

I have in this connection a special motive in the personal concern which I feel for the welfare of this church, and of all its households. My long acquaintance with this church in former years may justify or at least excuse a certain personal coloring to be put upon what I say. I have known most of your households from the days of your fathers and mothers—many of them from the days of their fathers and mothers. There is no family, saving of such as have but lately come among us, with which I have not interesting and pleasing associations, bearing upon them the sacredness of long-continuing years. There is not a family nor a person of those that have been long here, for whom I do not have a genuine and sincere personal affection. It is a matter of regret to me that I see you now so seldom, and that the closeness of former knowledge is of necessity somewhat broken.

I have indeed long since given up, as it was my duty to do, all sense of official responsibility for the welfare of the church or of its individual members. But I cannot cast off, and you would not wish me to try to cast off, the deep sense of personal friendliness that I have for every one of you. And I shall not try either, to lay aside a certain feeling of personal concern for the welfare of you all, born of the associations and memories of the long past, and not likely to end, except with life itself.

Personal responsibilities for the welfare of us all rest indeed upon every one of us. They have been assumed in a special and public manner by those of us who are members of the church, and who have covenanted to watch over one another "in a spirit of meekness, love and tenderness." Those of you also who have not entered into these special engagements are not outside the great obligations that rest on every man living in a Christian social state, and on every man that knows, or that should know and love the God and Father of us all.

So are we here on this Sabbath day in the presence of God and of one another that we may make some gain for ourselves and for each other in the purpose and power of right living as the children of God. There is much to be done. Consider a little what thoughts should come into your minds in these hours of worship. You are here that you may put out of your mind and heart every form and shadow of evil; that you may know how to cease forever from being envious or jealous of each other, or of any human being; that you may become kindly affectioned, altogether, toward one another, and toward everyone, everywhere; that you may become quick, and not slow, in the movings of sympathy toward every one; that you may know how to be always just; that you may be faithful, beyond all chance of failure or forgetfulness, to all obligations of every sort that you have assumed, or ever ought to assume. You are here that you may become unfailingly patient and unfailingly courageous, unfailingly firm and unfailingly gentle, according as the shifting winds of life may blow upon you. You are

here to become intelligent, to the full limit of your capacities, concerning the thoughts and ways of God. You are here to learn your own place in the midst of the works of God, whose workmanship in part you are. You are here to know how to open your mind to every ray of truth and your heart to every holy motive from God and man. You are here to offer true and spiritual worship to God who is Himself a Spirit, that you may learn His love, that you may accept His grace, and that you may enter if you can, into His immortality. It is enough to do.

I can set the great truth but a little before you. It is needful rather for you to set it before yourself, and become accustomed to doing it. There is a constant danger of our becoming indifferent to those things which are our life. The tree that did not listen to the voice of God in the rain and the sunshine, in springtime and autumn, that tree would perish.

I am setting these things before you, however, not in warning, but chiefly in hope. It is not a grievance that we are expected to learn

and gain the powers and graces of the Christian life. These things are our inheritance as the children of God. We rejoice in them.

In so far as this church assists us in taking to ourselves these spiritual powers and gifts it is fulfilling the purpose for which it has been established and maintained. We believe that it has fulfilled this purpose in some fair degree for those who have been its members. We hope and expect that it will continue to do so. That is why we love the church. That is why we hope that it will live and prosper. That is why we wish that all our friends and neighbors would join us in it. It is because the church is an agency appointed of God to this very end, that it may bring the truths and motives of the Christian faith to bear upon us, in the cleansing of our hearts and lives of every evil thing, and in the fashioning of our souls after the mind of God. It is a lofty end. We hope and expect that it will be reached.

Now we ought to keep this tone of hope. I think of it in connection with the coming of our new pastor. I sometimes hear one speak —or I hear that some one has spoken in this

way—"I pity the young man that is coming here; he is going to have a hard time." It is not said with an ill will. It is meant to be said in kindness. But it is not well said, and it is not true. This young man is not coming here to have a hard time. He is coming here to enjoy his life with us. He is coming here as one who loves God, and as one that will try to help us in all good things. We shall be glad to see him. We shall welcome him, and we shall help him as much as we can. I do not believe that there is a person in this assembly that has any different purpose or thought as to himself. There is not one here who does not mean to treat the new minister kindly, and to give him what help he can.

This is what we should all expect of us all. Good expectations tend to fulfil themselves. Good thoughts about one another and good words tend to produce good. Discouraging thoughts, discouraging words about one another, or about our church or community, would tend to bring on the evil we may fear. Let us keep our discouragements, if we have any, within our own hearts. Let us speak only

words of hope and good cheer; so we shall have the more cheerful things to speak of.

I am ready to go farther. I think it might be well if we were to leave off all disagreeable speaking of every sort. Now I know that this would be but a clumsy rule to follow. But a clumsy tool with a blunt edge has sometimes its advantages. You can all recognize a disagreeable thing that is to be done or said. You know it when you come near it. You could therefore stop it. The disagreeable word would not be spoken unawares—slipping by you, carrying perhaps much evil with it. Probably if we were all to determine that we would leave off the saying of any disagreeable thing whatsoever, we should omit the saying of some things that ought to be said, for there are times when unpleasant things need to be said or done. But there are not really in a Christian community like ours very many such times. And the good that we should miss by the total cutting off of all disagreeable speech would be overbalanced a hundred times by the good we should gain through the utter silencing of every uncomfortable word.

I have no fondness for general pledges in matters of this kind. The well-trained Christian man ought to be able to govern himself by himself, as the occasions come up. But we are not altogether sure about being well-trained Christian men. And I should not be sorry if every person in this assembly and in this parish, should now resolve that for a certain time he would not speak one disagreeable word concerning any human being. I think we could get on for a day—or a week—or for a whole month. I think too that it would be, taken together, the best month we ever saw in this community. If our new pastor should come here while we were in such a state and should find that he could never hear, and that no one could ever hear one disagreeable word about anyone, he might think that by some misdirection he had gotten prematurely into heaven,—What if we should prepare for him some such foretaste of heaven?

It is true too, that while disagreeable words may sometimes have their use, yet they are very apt to pass into words of unkindness and real hatefulness. Unkindness and hatefulness

are wholly wicked. They are wicked everywhere and always. They are directly contrary to the great law of love between man and man.

Unkind words can never thus be properly spoken. Every person trying at all to be a Christian ought to put unkind speech with carefulness far away from his lips. So while disagreeableness is not necessarily unkindness, yet it is so apt to be near it that when we find ourselves ready to become disagreeable, we should be put on our guard lest we should become unkind and hateful. Disagreeableness is a kind of signal bell that rings to let us know that hatefulness is not far off. Altogether therefore, I think the experiment of putting all disagreeableness wholly away from among us would bring us very great satisfactions with but slight risks of any harm resulting.

The fact is worthy of our consideration, too, that whenever in any place there are real evils to be resisted, the uttering of direct reproof is not commonly, and I think not ever, the most effective appliance. Such reproof is sometimes needed, but it is a secondary thing

at most. If reproof is put foremost it is apt to do more hurt than good. The chief remedy is in the positive forces of righteousness and grace set forth in the lives of men.

It is said by scientific men, that the malignant microscopic germs which lie in wait for the poisoning of life, will perish, the most of them, withered and shorn of their venom, if a few hours of sunshine or even often a few flashes of clear sunlight, may fall upon them. The germs that breed moral pestilences in a community are best destroyed by the presence of men and women strong, steadfast and gracious, the light of whose lives shines through all the place, and cleanses its air.

In the victorious wars of the kingdom of God the first direction of the manual of arms is this,—"Overcome evil with good." In so far therefore as we are able to meet and do meet these responsibilities which are upon us for continued personal growth in Christian strength and grace, we shall at the same time prepare the best welcome for our new pastor, and shall best promote the safety and well-being of the church.

The history of our church confirms such counsels and strengthens every such hope. This church has lived from the past by whatever measure of grace it has had, and that measure through most of its life has not been small. I call to mind especially one man, of whom we like to think that he was the first real pastor of this church, though in the order of time he was not the first—as if those that had a name here before need not be counted. He brought to the church the reviving powers of the Christian faith, as by the morning sunrise after a night of storms. He put penitence for bitterness and strife. He put confession for suspicions. He put love in the place of fear, such love as casts out such fear. He set on foot the wholesome activities of a social state;—(he was "hurrying himself about a school-house."). His own life ran close to the earth he lived on, and to the home he loved, and it bore the better for that the fragrance of heaven. His name is here upon this memorial window. But the real memorial of Joseph Green is in the peace of the long centuries that have followed. And his remembrance will

endure, we trust, through peaceful centuries yet to come.

Even through the earlier troublous years men and women who could discern the light and hope of the Christian faith had not been altogether wanting here. Such men and women have never been lacking in these surrounding homes and in this house of prayer and worship. In the nineteenth year of my ministry I preached a sermon in which were given the names of fifty-six members of the church that had died since my coming. Little was said concerning them; with the larger part nothing was said. The purpose was not that they might be praised, but that they might be remembered. I think that there was no occasion of my pastorate, before or after, that made upon my own mind so deep an impression. The names of later times might be added today. But it could not be done by me in every case with equal fulness of knowledge, and perhaps it could not be done by me now with equal propriety. But the record of this church of God has not been closed. The names of those that have passed before belong

in almost all our households. Many of the names have not yet gone far into the dimness of the past. Near at hand or far off, if the long roll could be set now visibly before us, even with whatever shadows or stains it might bear upon it, I am persuaded that it would fill all our minds, not alone with an awe, as if we were in the presence of eternal things, but more with an exhilaration, as if the glory of the immortal state were upon us, and as if we could behold for a moment the sacred march of the just in their perfection.

And the walk of the members of this Christian church, while they have been on the earth, with all its error and weakness, has been a walk in much of faith, and hope and love, toward the perfection of heaven.

Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does still so easily beset us, and let us run with patience and carefulness the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the

shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The joy thus set before the Lord was in part the joy with which He should behold this very aim and effort of His followers, to lay aside in their earthly lives these hindering weights and these entangling sins, and to gain some likeness of spirit to Himself. Let us enlarge if we may, this joy which He may have in each one of us.

XIII

A WISE HEART WITH AGE

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Psalm 90: 12. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

In the Revised version, the last clause of the verse is rendered somewhat more exactly and pointedly, so that the passage reads—"So teach us to number our days that we may get us an heart of wisdom." Either way it is a prayer that we may have such knowledge and such thoughts concerning the duration of our present lives as shall help to make us wise. This prayer and purpose is appropriate to every period of life, to the young as well as to the old. It is appropriate to the young because they may have the most of their present life before them, and it is better to know how it should be wisely and profitably spent before it is spent, rather than after it is spent. It is appropriate to the old, because they have lived so long that they ought to know the worth of a wise heart, and because their experiences

and their opportunities for observation and reflection ought to be of use to them in getting such a heart for themselves. As between the young and the old, the topic of the right use of time may be of more direct service in the way of practice perhaps, to the young, while it may be more comforting and strengthening in the way of reflection possibly, to the old. To all alike, the keeping of the Sabbath day ought to help one forward in this prosperous search for wisdom.

The search is prosperous. It is a pleasing thought for us at the outset that there is this color of hopefulness cast over the natural processes and the fitting results of human life. We are not born and set forth on this earthly life, that we should grow strong for a little, and then should grow weak and die. We are here to grow wise in heart and so to be ready to live forever with God. We should be quick to see the hope and to lay hold upon it.

Let us consider a little this going on into age and see what reflections should be made upon it.

Our progress in years is something that we

do not usually take much notice of for ourselves. Age comes stealthily upon us. We see its approach upon others more easily than upon ourselves. When after many years we meet those whom we had known in youth, we are surprised often at the change that we see in them, though we may not have been impressed in the same way by any changes in ourselves. We do not easily think of ourselves as old. (When I was asked, not many years ago, to take a special part in a service that was being arranged for the old, I did not exactly understand at first why any such proposal should be made to *me!*) We are apt to refer the signs of age to causes outside ourselves. The print in the papers and books we read is not so clear as it used to be. The light in the rooms is not so bright, or it does not fall properly upon our desks. The trouble is in something somewhere, not in us.

Probably it is better for us that it should appear to us in this way, and that we should not be disposed to be always looking for signs of age with ourselves. But we should not wish to walk blindly. We need to know really

where we are; and if we are beginning to get wise hearts, it does not hurt us at all to know it.

The coming on of age is inevitable as well as stealthy. Nothing can stop our growing old, unless indeed we should die while we are young,—and the remedy would not be commonly thought of as better than the disorder. Old age may be delayed somewhat by carefulness and by cheerfulness; and it ought to be diligently put off in all such ways. But sooner or later it will come.

Old age comes swiftly too, however it may be put off in its coming. Everywhere among men the swiftness of the flight of time has been proverbial. The years are never long except to those that have seen but few of them. We can all remember that when we were children, the space seemed long from the winter to the spring, and from the spring to the ripening of the nuts and the snow-fall. From the annual Thanksgiving onward to the next, the distance was in prospect interminable. Now from midwinter to the melting of the snows and the peeping of the frogs is but a step; then we are at the memorial days, and the

celebrations of May and July; and then the western summer twilights shorten, the skies are whiter at sunset, the frost cuts the flowers, and it is winter. Each year the quick procession grows more swift.

Observe also that this period of age to which we come so soon is relatively a long one. It makes perhaps a fourth of the full measure of life,—like the fourth season, the winter of the year. We have thus, as we may reckon it, twenty years of childhood and youth, the spring-time; then twenty and twenty, or forty years, it may be, of maturity, from the early summer to the later autumn; and then twenty years perhaps of winter. The closing period is long enough to make it desirable for us to know how we may best prepare for it, and how we may spend it properly and prosperously.

It is worth while to consider too, that age has some natural resources of its own, and some peculiar opportunities and occasions of comfort and usefulness. We ought to make the best of old age; and we should look most on its bright sides, and not on its darkness.

To look on the bright things of life may be a natural characteristic of youth; but it ought to be a confirmed purpose, an acquisition and habit of age.

Consider then our advantages in age. We know better than we did once how to shape ourselves to our place in life. If we can jump less than when we were boys, we are delivered from the boyish disposition to jump; we do not wish to jump. If we can run less, we can sit still more. If we skip less nimbly, we step more carefully. If it hurts us more to fall, we take more pains to stand. If our senses are less acute, we are perhaps not less sensible. If we expect less, we know more. If we imagine less, we reflect more. If our fancy is less active, our understanding may be more solid. If we have fewer castles in the air, we dwell more contentedly in our houses upon the ground. If we look forward less, we look backward more; but we need not look forward less. If we have fewer golden dreams in our heads, we have learned that there are better things to dream of or to have, than gold. If the flowers have fallen, the fruits may be in

their places,—but the flowers need not wholly fall. If our visions of life are less gay, they may be more sober,—it is as good to be sober, in due measure, as to be gay. If we think less of the sunrise, we see more of the starlight. When we were young, we thought we were wise; now that we are old, we know that we are not wise, and herein we are much wiser than when we were young. When we were children, we wished that we were older; now that we are older, we are satisfied with the years to which we have already attained. In all its fulness of experience our age has its natural balancing compensations which are not small. We ought to be grateful for them. The stores of memory especially are rich. How poor the lives must be that do not have present within them the great days of the war for the Union!

Besides all these natural resources of age we should consider that there are many mental and spiritual preparations that may be made for comfort and usefulness as our lives advance. Many of the most pleasing natural qualities of youth may be replaced, or renewed

and filled out into corresponding spiritual fruits of maturer life. It is a great part of the work of a reasonable Christian life to be doing this very thing.

Youth is naturally hopeful, confident, quick in sympathy, and disposed, in all the best lives, to be generous, unselfish, high-minded and sincere. Which of these should not continue to old age? Which of them should not grow steady and strong and full? In youth itself, these natural lights of youth are often flickering and changeable, with impulsive flashings and fadings. But all the practice of the maturing Christian life should go to make clear and steady these early graces and glories. They need to be fed from outside the springs of nature, with purpose and practice, and prayer and patience.

This is a chief occupation of the Christian life. We are set to catch these beauteous patterns of early life—ready of themselves to vanish—and fix them in the permanence of enduring character; as if the colors of the morning dew-drop might be fixed in lasting stone and worn as untarnishable gems forever.

Left to itself the hopefulness of youth may be quickly clouded; its sympathies may lead into evil ways and dissipations, and its early generosity may be stifled and crowded out in the cares and pressures of business, leaving only dulness and selfishness of heart instead. Many lives are dull and moldy when they are not old in years. But you remember that faith, hope and love are in the Christian list of the things abiding. "Now abideth faith, hope and charity," the great saying runs. And why should they not abide? Which one of them should pass away, or be darkened with time? How should not the untried and natural hopefulness of youth pass into the tested and elastic courage of enlarging experience? Thus Paul says, — "Patience worketh experience, and experience, hope." He puts hope after patience and experience, or after the state of being tried and proved. Hope is not at the beginning of the Christian life chiefly, but rather on toward the end. So with every natural and spiritual grace. And how should one not be hopeful in a world ordained and governed of God? How should one not be cheerful who

walks with God? How should one not have faith and love who knows God? And how should these not grow and brighten with growing time and with clearer sight of God? Thus the path of the just—the wise in heart—is as the shining light, the spreading morning twilight, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

This is the mind of the Author of life concerning man. He is able to bring it to pass. It does come to pass in many lives, whose grace and strength are fed from God, by means of human faith and carefulness. All the best things of youth are possible to be thus nourished and made imperishable. We must see to it for ourselves that this shining purpose of God does not fail with any one of us.

We need not forget that age has its natural darkness. There is failing strength, and weariness, and it may be, painfulness. But these may be borne with patience, and with grace from God. If mental faculties fail in part, which may sometimes be most sad, yet this may be thought of as a lessening of the

responsibilities of life, rather than as a darkening of its hopes.

Some special counsels or cautions may here come to our minds with respect to the proper preparations for age. There are changing exposures with the changing periods of life. It is a mistake to think that any part of life is without its peculiar besetments. One such besetment of age is that it is liable to fall into this very snare, and to think that the time of danger is past. It will never be past until we are within the walls of heaven. Age has its own liabilities and exposures. Some of these are in directions contrary to the exposures of youth. There is the tendency to restrain and repress too far the quick motions of sympathy or of fellowship, and to become in all things calculating. Another tendency is that of receiving attentions without special care to recognize them, as if they came to us merely as our due. Another is the tendency to be drawn in too much upon one's self, and to go out too little in knowledge and sympathy into the lives of others. Thus arises the tendency to think too much and perhaps to talk too much of

one's self, or of what one has seen or done, which goes to make life narrow and dry. All these mischiefs, and all others like them, should be guarded against as one grows old, and long before one begins to be old.

Benevolent giving has a special use as a means of helping to keep up the breadth and unselfishness of life in old age. The love of money often holds on in age. It is apt, I think, to hold on rather stoutly. Perhaps it is fortunate that it does, for here, at least, by resolutely giving what one can of the money or possessions that one loves, a man can keep up and nourish the great vital Christian and human graces of love to God and love to man. We who are in years should watch for this necessity and opportunity with ourselves, and should not fail to practise some self-denial here at least where we may, so that we may make it sure that we do not lose our step in this Christian march to the end of life. Possibly there should be arranged times of special giving when none but the old should be allowed to take part.

Finally, we may consider that age should

represent fitness of life for the highest life beyond. It may represent it. The life beyond is higher. It is close to the life of age. The life of age should be like it. I do not mean that old age should be mostly taken up with hopes as to the future, or with looking in any way chiefly to the future. The cares of life in every period lie mostly with life itself. The concerns of age are largely with the things present in age. But all life is near to the life beyond; and age most near. All the higher powers of life are the same on earth and in the coming stage beyond, and with these loftier and choicer powers we should have the most to do in every period of life. Old age is most near to the immortal state in which these quickening agencies have their fullest scope. It is the hope, the right and the duty of age, beyond anything besides of earthly life, to come most fully within the range and sweep of these animating and cleansing powers of the imperishable life.

Age is rich and strong. The heaven itself is the home of the old. Most of its inhabitants are in far old age, much beyond the age of the

earth. The Ancient of Days is among them. As they number before Him their endless years they grow wise in heart with unhindered speed and with a gladness unknown on earth. The old with us are most near to heaven. Our likeness in mind and heart should be most close to these our kindred, who are but a little before us.

The fitting preparations for age are thus befitting to every period of life. They are becoming both to the earth and the heaven. They are needful for both. The young and those of middle age need to make these preparations with equal diligence. If you are not fit to be old, you are not fit for heaven, or for life.

The sum of all preparation, the sum of all hope in every hour of life is in the knowledge of God. It is He with whom most of all we have to do, on earth and in heaven. His intelligence and His power surround us on every side. They penetrate all our life. His wisdom, His love and grace, animate and warm our souls. To know Him and Jesus Christ His Son, is eternal life. You are to be congratu-

lated, in youth or age, who have begun to discern and appreciate the glory and warmth of the life of God. You are to be commiserated, in age or youth, who do not know God. "He compasses our path and our lying down." "In Him we live and move and have our being." In Him are all fellowships, all hopes, all affections, all clear and endless friendships. This is the communion of the children of God.

"One family we dwell in Him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

"One army of the living God,
To His command we bow;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

Into this sacred fellowship with God, and with all trustful men, we ought now to be drawing most closely nigh. We turn to God with purpose and with grateful choice. Our hearts are not strong. He is strong, and clothed with life. We give Him blessing. We bring before Him praise and prayer. And may He forgive our sins, and redeem forever our souls.

XIV

THE STATE OF HEAVEN

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Colossians 1:5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

The Apostle gave thanks to God as he thought of this hope as belonging to those to whom he wrote. Thanks are to be given to God in behalf of every Christian believer for the same thing. Every Christian gives thanks himself for this hope he has, laid up in heaven. There is a place above the earth, and a state beyond time, toward which believing men look forward, and to which they hope to come. This is distinctive of a Christian man, that he has a hope in heaven.

Many things are told us in the Scriptures concerning heaven. Heaven is a place of endless life. It is a state of immortality. Men that die and enter heaven, never die again. Death, their last enemy, has been destroyed. None of the pains connected with death will ever be felt in heaven. None of the griefs

that go along with it will ever be experienced. Thus it is written of the inhabitants of heaven that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Heaven is a land of health. None of its inhabitants ever say, "I am sick." All that are there are always in their full natural strength. None are ever weak. None are ever in any way disabled. None are ever in want of any needful thing. "They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them." "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." It will be a state very unlike the present life, with its weakness and pain and briefness, and with death coming surely on it.

Heaven is a place of perfect activity. This follows after the other. Where life does not wear out and die, where it is always healthful and strong, there activity can be endless and full. Immortality and perfect action belong

together. They are in substance the same. The dwellers in heaven are thus alive and in vigor forever.

Heaven is a place of perfect rest. There remains a rest for the people of God. It is found in heaven. I shall speak further of the rest and the activity of heaven, keeping them both in our thoughts together. They are not contrary to each other. Where the powers of life are full and activity is free, there is no weariness, and one is at rest even in the midst of action. We do not know whether or not those that are in heaven are in fact always astir and moving, or busied in any occupation. They may have their spaces of actual rest as we do. Not much is told us in the Bible of such matters. We cannot tell very much by any use of our reason upon them. Many things indeed which have been always in the minds of Christian men concerning heaven are hard really to understand. Some that seem most precious and sure and sacred are most difficult to imagine. We have in the old hymns some pictures of the rest and calm of heaven.

"Thine earthly sabbaths, Lord, we love,
But there's a nobler rest above;
So that our longing souls aspire
With cheerful hope and strong desire.

"No rude alarms of raging foes,
No cares to break the long repose,
No midnight shade, no clouded sun,
But sacred, high, eternal noon.

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"There faith lifts up her cheerful eye,
To brighter prospects given,
And views the tempest passing by,
The evening shadows quickly fly,
And all serene in heaven."

* * * * * * * *

"O'er all those wide extended plains
Shines one eternal day;
There God, the sun, forever reigns,
And scatters night away."

* * * * * * * *

"I will sing you a song of that beautiful land,
The far-away home of the soul,
Where no storms ever beat on that glittering strand,
While the years of eternity roll."

* * * * * * * *

"Oh, holy, heavenly home!
Oh rest eternal there!
When shall the exiles come,
Where they cease from earthly care,
In the new Jerusalem!"

* * * * * * * *

"We soon shall see the day,
When all our toils shall cease;
When we shall cast our arms away,
And dwell in endless peace."

Such has ever been the constant Christian hope. The imagery of these hymns is noble and beautiful; but we realize, as we think upon it, that as exact descriptions of what we desire in the heavenly home, they do not entirely satisfy us. Do we really hope for an unbroken rest? Do we wish for a perpetual calm, either in the world about us, or in our souls within us, or in the social state in which we move? Would we have no clouds upon the sky? No shadows on the earth? Would we rest in a land of "infinite day," beneath an "eternal noon?" Would we stay forever upon a "glittering strand," on which "no storms ever beat," a shore upon whose level edge the still blue ocean lay in unmoving, unending rest? Should we not be weary of endless and changeless calm, and the steady glitter on the sands? Would it not be better that there should be shadows on the waters? Should there not sometimes be storms and

waves, and the darkness of night? And are we sure that we should wish to be clear forever from all the burdens and trials of life, for which the darkness and the storms of the outward world are made to stand? Should we wish that all our toils should utterly cease, and that we should enter upon a long repose which no care at all should ever break? Should there be no responsibilities resting on us? Would we have no concern respecting what we might do, and respecting the results of the things we planned and wrought for? Would we "cast our arms aside" and "dwell in endless peace," with no stir of any conflict ever again to move us? Would we have no more any of the changing emotions that come to us now from the pressing together of fears and hopes? Or as to our affections, are we even sure that all the tenderness of life would last if all the solicitudes of life were to cease forever? We are indeed in many things the children of the earth and the present time. We have grown to live in the midst of its uncertain scenes and under its changing lights and shadows. We need now the shadows with the light. It is

hard for us to understand how such alteration might be made upon the present state as to remove all pains and all hardships, all fears and concerns, without bringing in also some dulness and staleness and sluggishness of life. But things that seem impossible to men may be possible with God.

In part the present necessity for some pressure of labors and trials on us has to do with present sinfulness and with immaturity of life. We need chastenings to make our hearts better. We need discipline and training under trials to teach us to be patient and resolute in mind, and to make us capable in action. Few men would be prosperous now in mind and heart if they were prospered wholly in every outward thing. But this need not always continue to be so. With grace enough and strength enough in the soul, prosperity might be borne; and the uses of trouble might be dispensed with. Even as human life is seen in the present world, in so far as Christian character becomes fixed with power in lines of goodness, the force of pressure from fears and exigencies, or from any outward source,

comes to be less required. With all growth in strength come increasing enjoyments in appropriate action itself. With all growing goodness the satisfactions of goodness itself enlarge. The time may come with every man whose steps are tending upward, when the powers of life and love of themselves will draw him on to all holy and grateful action without the spur upon him of fears or disturbing anxieties. Thus the inhabitants of heaven may be eager in all their activities, though they are not tossed with selfish rivalries, nor drawn by narrow and chafing ambitions. They may be diligent, though they do not hunger nor thirst. They may be watchful against every evil, though the "rude alarms of raging foes" have ceased. They may be sensitive and tender in all the intercourse of friendship, though in their everlasting security they are not concerned lest friends should depart. The activities of a holy and perfect state need not depend, as in many things they do with us, upon the opposition of evils and the incitements of dangers.

Then too we may be sure that the heavenly

life will be fitted to all that is peculiar in the heavenly world. Our present lives are fitted to the world we live in. Our instincts and sentiments in many things are shaped to the earth. The sentiments of heaven will be shaped to the heaven. We are the children now of the earth and of time. In the heavenly land, if we reach it, we shall be the children of the resurrection and the sons of immortality. The requirements of a lofty state will be laid upon the congenial powers of a lofty life. The heaven will not be in anything strange or hard to its settled occupants. The earth in the few years we are here makes us at home upon it; much more will everlasting heaven. And if in some things we cannot now easily imagine in what manner our powers of being are to be adjusted to conditions far unlike the present, yet we need not doubt that it can be done. An immortal life very quickly makes itself grateful, as by the force of a mighty nature, to those that enter on it. The Founder of immortality, the Author Himself of life, is able to devise and ordain the appointments of heaven in such a manner that its

state shall be suited to all the wholesome and rational necessities and desires of its inhabitants.

This trust we have in God is indeed our only sure dependence with respect to the happiness and prosperity of heaven. We should be poorly able ourselves to lay out its conditions in prospect in a manner satisfactory even to our own thoughts. It is too far above us. But its adequate preparation and everlasting establishment are with God. He is able to make it a place of rest and of action, of unbroken security and endless life and prosperity together. And such it will be. This faith by which we join together our thoughts of God and our hopes respecting heaven is central in all things concerning heaven.

Heaven is the place of the special presence and of the joyful sight and service of God. Even concerning the natural conditions of life of which we have been speaking, it seems to be suggested in the Bible that that which is high and wonderful in them stands in some manner connected with the peculiar presence of God in heaven. We are told that the sun

and the heat will not smite on the dwellers in heaven, and then it is said concerning the heavenly city, that "It had no need of the sun to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it." And when it is said again "There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun," the reason is added again; "For the Lord God giveth them light." The "eternal noon of heaven," its "day without night" is of God. Thus it does not smite with heat. It is the light, both softened and quickening, of an infinite life and love. The "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal," which flows through the midst of heaven, and among the trees of healing leaves and constant fruit, is a river "proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." In such ways the power and love of God stand along with the perpetual activities and the sacred rest of heaven. It fits with the love of God that those who love Him should abide in the ceaseless consciousness of an unchangeable blessing. It lies within the almighty power of God to sustain their lives at this steadfast height.

Concerning the activities of heaven also we can see somewhat of how they stand naturally connected with thoughts of God, and with trust and love toward Him. We have observed that many of the occasions that move us to the present labors of life will cease to exist. In heaven if we are there, we shall not be driven to toil by the pinch of hunger or of cold. We shall not have the same concerns of government, nor the same need of protection against the violence of individual men or of nations. We shall not have the same cares respecting our households and our social state. Whatever of these may continue, there will at least be change upon them in the removal from them of all that belongs with the actual experience of pain or hardship, or with the dread fear of personal or surrounding evil. In so far some motives to action would be removed. But new opportunities of action and new incentives to effort will more than fill their place. This great intensifying of the powers of life will spring chiefly from the nearness into which we shall be brought to the thoughts of God and the knowledge of His

love. Heaven will be a place of large opportunities for knowing the counsels and works of God. Even in outward things the change will be great. Heaven is a place of central and commanding observation. It overlooks the wide creation, built of God. Its highways go out among the stars, lighted of God. Its prospects cover the courses of providence, ordained of God, and unfolding from the first mornings of time. Heaven is itself the city of God. It lies nigh to Him. He dwells peculiarly within it. His graces and glories shine throughout it. It is full of Him. This knowledge of the works of God, this pervading and enlightening presence of God, must stir unspeakably the minds of those that dwell in heaven. Motives to action and joy in action, springing from love and trust, will be large, and will grow forever, beyond what is known on earth.

The being of God Himself is greater and better than all other things. If one can think upon it, and with some likeness to it in reason, feeling and purpose, such thoughts on earth, and even with still sinful men, are large and

precious and absorbing beyond all that can be told of them. Far more they will be great and absorbing, refreshing and controlling to the intelligence of the holy man in heaven. When we think a little now of the manner in which the infinite greatness and goodness of God lie open to the inhabitants of heaven, surrounding them from the past, the present, and from all the coming ages, we can understand that there should be in heaven the endless service of praise and worship before God. Endless *assemblies* there may not be, but the state of worship cannot end. On earth, in the midst of their common occupations, wise and reverent men grow to be worshipful. In heaven, with quickened reason and warmer love, whatever they may do, they can never cease to worship God.

Men from the earth too, who have been redeemed from sin, can never fail to be drawn by grateful memories and sacred affections toward the Lord Himself, the Redeemer of men. He will be there, the Leader and Companion and Head of all that enter heaven from the earth. Thus most sacred, most high,

most central in heaven, is "the glory of God that lightens it," and the Lamb that is the light thereof.

Heaven is a place of perfect holiness with all its inhabitants. The highway toward it is one over which the unclean shall not pass. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." It is a land of everlasting righteousness and love, and of nothing else besides. It is a land of righteous, trustful and loving men.

The worst of all the troubles of time come from wrong and darkness within ourselves. We shall be clear of these when we enter heaven. Outside ourselves, the worst of all the troubles of the earth are from the evil that is in other men, from weakness, from neglect, from indifference and coldness, from unfaithfulness, from frauds and treacheries, from all the raging and darkening crowd of hatreds and cruelties and shames. It would be a blessing indeed if one might go apart himself, righteous and faithful and true, into a land where

none of these the contrary things could ever enter. Heaven is such a land. If you enter it, you will never afterward be tried with evil men. You will never meet with any whom you may not safely love and trust. You will have no companions there except those whose righteousness has gone, tested and approved, past the bar of God. It is a happy lot,—if your righteousness itself passes the trial.

Heaven is also a place of endless companionship with faithful friends and worthy men. The false are without, the faithful are within. Heaven will have its riches of both mind and heart. There are the strong, the great in every work and art. They do bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. There are those —the many—whose glory and honor were first distinctly revealed in heaven. There are the men, women and children who have been faithful in their homes and their daily occupations, whose faithfulness shines in the light of heaven. There are entered all the ransomed of the Lord with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They take sweet counsel there together. Pleasing associations with

memories gathering upon them abide forever. Sacred affections endure unbroken. There is no end to heaven. If you enter there, you will go no more out forever.

Heaven is a place of outward beauty and delight, appropriate to all these other things. The master Architect of all constructions and adornments prepàres it. He makes its grace and beauty to befit its eternal righteousness. Heaven is a city showing forth the glory of God. The foundations of the wall of it are garnished with all manner of precious stones. It is a city of pure gold, clear as crystal, and its light is like a stone most precious.

Heaven is a place near at hand. It is not far off and inaccessible. It can be reached from the earth. You can have even now your conversation—your manner of life—in heaven. You can lay up within yourself the precious things of heaven. Your sins, which make you unlike the heaven, can be pardoned. You can commit your soul to the faithful Son of God, who came from heaven for you. Then will be fulfilled in your behalf the sacred prayer He made, that you, believing in Him, should be

with Him where He is, and share His grace and behold His glory.

I point you today to the open heaven, to the golden city, enlightened of God, to the general assembly of just and friendly men gathered within its walls. I set before you this lofty hope. This heaven of the Christian believer is full and rich, and it is close at hand. You can enter it. You must not miss it. I trust you will rise today and journey toward it. I trust you will go at the call of God within its gates, redeemed, renewed, rejoicing.

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